

SEPTEMBER

25 CENTS

BLUE BOOK

Stories of adventure for MEN, by MEN



Mooney Makes with Murder
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The Unfinished Search
A thrill-crammed drama
of post-war Europe
by **GORDON KEYNE**

The Treasure Chest
by **ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON**

**ACHMED ABDULLAH, JOHN T. McINTYRE,
H. BEDFORD-JONES, CARROLL ALCOTT**

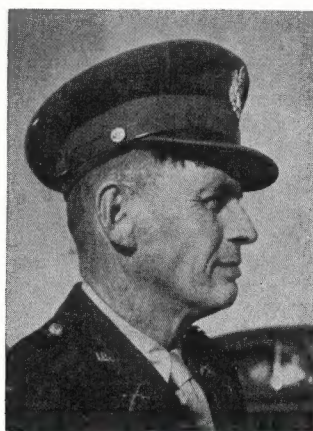
Who's Who In this Issue

CARROLL ALCOTT

BORN in 1901 at Des Moines, Iowa: Carroll Alcott studied mining engineering at college, but went into newspaper work instead. After a succession of journalistic jobs, he went to the Philippines as correspondent in 1926, and from 1929 to the outbreak of hostilities worked in Shanghai as reporter, editor and radio commentator — meanwhile conducting a fierce one-man fight against the Rising Sun. An extensive excerpt from his book "My War with Japan," begins on page 90. At the right is a photograph taken during his last hectic days in Shanghai, when Japanese attempts to assassinate him brought him out wearing a bullet-proof vest and accompanied by a bodyguard.



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ALLAN V. ELSTON

AFTER graduation in engineering at the University of Missouri, I went to a copper mine in Chile, where I built a section of high-country railroad, drove a condenser-intake tunnel under the surf of the Pacific Ocean and surveyed a pipeline to the high Andes. Several of my earlier yarns were about the Chilean pampas.

I was a captain of engineers in the first World War. Sandwiched in among engineering, army and writing careers, I got in about five years running a cattle-ranch in Colorado.

The same wife who read my first story still tells me what is wrong with my last one. My three descendants are aged 8, 13, and 23. The oldest is an engineering planner at a factory making flying fortresses. In October, 1942, I was commissioned, and am now a major in a tank-destroyer unit of the U. S. Army.

ALBERT MOREHEAD

PROFICIENCY at games, it is said, argues a misspent youth. . . . Within twelve years of my birth (which was at Chattanooga, thirty-four years ago) I was risking my earnings as a cub reporter on the Chattanooga Times in poker games.



Blackstone Studios

I went to Harvard, class of '29, but the college curriculum did not recognize my field of concentration, which was auction bridge, and after two years I left.

But it turned out that I could actually make games support me, a wife and two children. In 1932 I went to work for Ely Culbertson, editing his *Bridge World*.

Since 1938 I have served as bridge editor of the New York Times, and produced crossword puzzles (which have appeared monthly in BLUE BOOK for more than a year now). While I have written, edited or collaborated in some fifty books, the first one to appear under my name will be a volume of these "double-talk crossword puzzles" to be published this month.

DON MORRIS

This is being written at one o'clock in the morning on account of we're short of help—or had you heard? "We" is the editor.

I got into this writing business in high school when a teacher with inside knowledge of some sour entries in an essay contest urged me to enter. The old story: surprise, I won! Afterward she said to me: "Of course, you're going to be a writer, aren't you?"

I decided to get into newspaper work, so I reversed Horace Greeley's advice, went from my birthplace of Denver to New York, and got a job as copy-boy on the old New York Tribune. After a couple of years I'd worked up to leg man, so I came to Florida and worked down to editor. I've been here ever since.

Married; one adorable brat, female. Hobby, writing; work, salt-water fishing. War work, besides newspapering: intelligence officer, Civil Air Patrol; correspondent, Writers' War Board.



H. E. Robideaux

BLUE BOOK

September, 1943

MAGAZINE

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High Lights of the New Books
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- Cover Design** Painted by Herbert Morton Stoops

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READERS' COMMENT*

AND HE'S FIGHTING FOR US

The people of the U. S. are O. K.! I was fortunate enough to get the May BLUE BOOK and discovered the truiness of the above statement by reading "What Do You Think?" and the Letters to the Editor.

Such ideas and thoughts, expressed by people in all walks of life show that we of the U. S. A. have something worth holding onto. It's grand to know we are doing it.

Douglas H. Phillips,
Signal Section, A. P. O. 846.

MORE MYSTERY NOVELS?

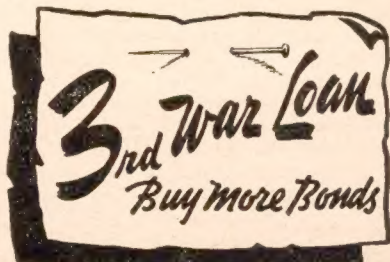
In vain I have looked in your "Letters to the Editor" for someone to give the commendation due you for the splendid series currently running in BLUE BOOK—"Flags of Our Fathers." As our country is again engaged in making history, this is a very timely subject. I have always appreciated history presented in fictionalized form, and I believe most people are interested in history but do not care for the textbook type of presentation. H. Bedford-Jones has certainly added a masterpiece to his credit and he should receive the praise due him. This type of story also affords a means of variety in stories which BLUE BOOK's editors maintain to such a fine degree.

However, I would like to see more of your mystery novels (not short stories) included in good ol' BLUE BOOK. Mysteries rate high with me as entertainment, and your brand of them has certainly had a lot to do with increasing my insatiable appetite for them. So here's hoping you will include many more of them in future issues.

Ed Schroer,
Cincinnati, Ohio.

*The Editors of BLUE BOOK are glad to receive letters of constructive criticism and suggestion; and for the ones we publish each month we will pay the writers ten dollars each.

Letters should not be longer than two hundred words; no letters can be returned; and all will become property of McCall Corporation. They should be addressed: Editor of Letters, Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York.



HE IS A RUTHLESS ANTAGONIST; BUT HE
MEETS DEFEAT IN THIS REMARKABLE
STORY,

by WILLIAM
BRANDON

SOME place in the big woods that began on Kendall Mountain and ran for countless miles to the north, encompassing lakes and streams alive with bass and trout that had never known lures, marching up the sides of gaunt mountains in endless siege on their naked summits, wading knee-deep through vast swamps black and rotten from an eon of shade, spreading on and on to the land of the moose and distances beyond to the range of the great brown bear; some place in the big woods the Hermit lived, or so Danny had heard people say.

He had seldom been seen, because the townspeople and the farmers never penetrated any more deeply into the woods than a sugaring bit drives into a maple trunk—that is to say, to the sapwood which lies just under the bark and far from the heart, for as in a sugar tree the juice of the woods lay just inside the rind of pastures and woodlots that laced its edge. Here the game stayed, deer and partridges and rabbits and squirrels, as near the plentiful food about the homes of men as safety allowed; and to feed from them in their turn were the bears and foxes and bobcats, so that the life of the woods was concentrated for the most part within a day's journey of its border, and all that lay beyond was eternal darkness and a silence of the trees that was like a sigh, they said, and could be heard; only emptiness and aged smells and mottled shade, and of course, the Hermit.

Lost hunters had seen him, and timber cruisers going out of their way following a hardwood ridge, and crazy fishermen who had gone too far looking for those virgin lakes. Danny's own father had seen the Hermit's tracks, his mother told him, and few enough had seen that much. The Hermit had a peg leg, his mother said, so his tracks were unmistakable.

"Your papa was guiding the Lovetts and the Barrs, and they was going away in to get to the top of Riddle Hill, and your papa got lost and there was old Mister Hermit's tracks, that



Old Pegleg

peg leg as big as a bull-ring and t'other foot going along on its toe, so," his mother would say. "Your papa followed right along until they just stopped and went out of sight, and lo and behold you, there he was back again at the camp!"

"Did the Lovetts and the Barrs see the tracks?"

"No, they didn't. They all went out and looked for them too, but your papa couldn't find them again."

It would be almost as interesting, Danny thought, to see the Lovetts and the Barrs as to see the Hermit. The Lovetts and the Barrs were rich, and

came from England; and before the war they all went into the woods once a year, and Danny's father guided them. Danny had been too young to remember them; but they remembered him, and each Christmas since he could remember, he had got a present from England from Nancy Barr, and it was always a much better present than everything else he got, put together. The Lovetts and the Barrs were all in England, and wouldn't be back until the war was over; and the only particular reason Danny had for wanting the war to be over was to see them.



"Your father thought the world and all of the Lovetts and the Barrs," his mother would say. "And they thought the same of him. They seen him in England, and they couldn't do enough for him."

IT was wonderful to think of his father in England with the Lovetts and the Barrs. Around Kendall, everybody was poor; the farms were poor and the life was hard; the cows stood in the pastures until the ground froze because everyone was always short of fall feed, and they went out again before the good could get in the

grass, because everyone was always short of winter feed; and families figured ten bushels of potatoes a head to get through a winter, because there was never a great deal else to eat. The community hung nibbling hungrily on the edge of the big woods like a worm on a dry apple; and it was only because of the woods that they stayed at all, because the men satisfied their souls with hunting there, and in the fall earned money as guides, and the women found peace in looking up from their work at the woods, if only because they had always done so. But in England, which

was far away, things were certainly different and grander; and it was fascinating to picture his father in that magnificence with the Lovetts and the Barrs, although it was difficult, for he could not remember either his father or the Lovetts and the Barrs, and England seemed so far away.

It was easier to imagine the peg-legged Hermit back in the big woods, the woods being the most convincing reality in his existence and the Hermit almost as much so. There was also the direct possibility that he might, through some chance, see the Hermit almost any day; he didn't really ex-

pect to see him that casually, but the woods were there and the Hermit was in them, so it was a thing that could conceivably come about; but with his father and the Lovetts and the Barrs it was different. His father was dead, and the Lovetts and the Barrs would not come back until the war was over; and to Danny, whose earliest memories were of people in his house excited about Dunkirk, where his father was killed, the war was a permanent condition, like weather.

Still, it would surely be over some day, and he would see the Lovetts and the Barrs; but in the meantime it was far more likely he would get acquainted with the Hermit first. Both events were reserved for some distant special days in the indistinct future, and he thought about them often, wondering how old he would be, and how he would behave, if he would be afraid of the woods or afraid of the Hermit, and if Nancy Barr would look like the picture of Sleeping Beauty in his book, his mother having said that Nancy Barr was a beautiful young lady.

IT was a disappointment when Danny came in one day from feeding the chickens to find a stranger in the house whom his mother introduced as Howard Lovett. There was nothing special about the day, and there was nothing at all remarkable about Howard Lovett, who was a short blond young man in worn-looking clothes and faded leggings, and who seemed to be sick. His mother was crying.

"So this is Danny," Howard Lovett said, looking at him with his sick, pale face. "Grown up, by George! How old are you now, Danny?"

"Five," Danny said.

"Well, well," Howard Lovett said, and that was all there was to it. Danny's mother went on crying softly and trying to stop, and Howard Lovett looked at the floor, and Danny stood a long time looking at him, while his disappointment rose and smothered his surprise; and then he went outside unhappily and played in the yard until suppertime.

Howard Lovett sat down with them to supper, and Danny's mother said: "Howard is going to stay with us awhile. He's been sick and he's going to stay with us awhile and get well." Her eyes were red from crying but she seemed to be all right now. She said: "Well, aren't you glad?"

"Are you really one of the Lovetts and the Barrs?" Danny asked.

His mother and Howard laughed; and Howard said he was.

"Howard's in the Navy," Danny's mother said. "He's had his ship sunk, and everything. I bound you'll want to hear all about it while he's here, won't you?"

"Where's Nancy Barr?" Danny asked.

They didn't answer him, and he went on looking at Howard, and Howard started to smile, and the smile slipped into a tormented grimace, as if his face had gone out of control, and it was horrible to watch. And then an instant later his pleasant blond features were settled in place again like a mask, and he looked down at his plate and went on with his dinner, and Danny still watched him, frightened but unable to look away.

"Danny," his mother said, "now you eat your supper."

Danny looked at her. "Where is she?"

"Danny," his mother said, distressed, "you shut up and eat your supper."

"I want to see her," Danny said. He was scared now, so that he was shivering. "I want to see her, not some old Howard Lovett."

His mother jumped up from the table and grabbed his ear and led him out of the dining-room and back to the summer kitchen, where she shook him and slapped his ears.

"Don't you never speak of Nancy Barr again while he's here," she said fiercely. "You hear me, young man?"

Danny cried and struggled.

"Don't you never speak her name again in his hearing!" And to be sure he would obey, she sent him on up to bed without the rest of his supper.

It was several days later, at a time when Howard Lovett was out of hearing, that his mother relented enough to tell him about Nancy Barr.

"She was struck by a bombshell splinter in England," she said, "and



she's dying right now; and poor Howard, he can't even get back to her, and they was to be married this year."

"Dying," Danny whispered, aghast. "The pity of it!" his mother said, biting her lip and shaking her head from side to side. "Now you see why you sha'n't speak of her again to Howard, because it would only hurt him, wouldn't it? So mind you don't."

He minded, and he was sorry for Howard the way his mother told him to be, with a sympathy somehow intuitively warning of his own grief coming at Christmas when, there would be no gift from Nancy Barr. He was sorry for Howard, the way a child is sorry for a sick calf or a broken lamp, because he senses it is not as it should be, it is passing and will be gone, and the surrounding secure world will be troubled until something has become familiar in its place.

For Howard's sickness was of the mind and the body and the heart and nerves all together; rest did not improve him; each day he said less, and each day he looked worse, until Danny's mother took to glancing at him out of the corners of her eyes while she sewed, and mumbling; and at last she went to an old woman in the town who grew herbs, but she came back empty-handed and told Danny secretly the old mother had said Howard must go to the woods to breathe—and that was nonsense, Danny's mother said irritably. That was gypsy talk and nonsense, and she told Danny to keep away from the old woman's house in the future.

There came a day when Howard didn't get out of bed, saying that he thought he would feel better really to take it easy and sleep through a day; and he did sleep part of the day

and all the night again, and the next day they had to shake him to awaken him; his face was drawn and his eyes were dull and sick and sleepy, and he fell asleep, again eating his breakfast; and in the afternoon Danny's mother had out the doctor from town.

"It's shock," the doctor said. "It's a sort of shock. It's a thing you can't put your finger on. I'll leave some medicine for him, and you send for me again tomorrow if he isn't better."

"It's bad, then, aint it?" Danny's mother whispered.

"I don't know," the doctor said truthfully. He started to go out, then stopped at the door, his lips pursed, his hat in his hand. "You must get him interested in something. He's strong enough physically. He must have something to do, that's all. What did he used to be interested in here?"

"The woods," Danny's mother said.

"Then get him into the woods. Put a shotgun in his hands and tell him to go hunting."

"I've told him to already, but he won't do it." She didn't tell him it had been on the old herb woman's advice.

The doctor stood a moment longer, looking into the afternoon sunshine and the black green wave of the big woods rolling over Kendall Mountain. "I'll come back tomorrow," he said.

DANNY's mother saw Danny standing behind her, and she said: "You go talk to Howard, Danny, and keep him awake."

"No," Danny said, "I don't like to."

"Don't be scared of him because he's sick," she said. "We've got to do everything we can to help him. Don't you forget how good him and his were to your papa when he was in England." She sat down in a rocker and folded her hands in her lap. "Howard looked up to your papa. Howard was just a boy fifteen or sixteen when your papa first knew them; and your papa was already grown up and married, and he knew the woods inside out, and Howard tried to be like him. Why, when the Lovetts and the Barrs was here, Howard and Nancy both followed him around always. You don't know what it means to me, seeing Howard again, just like the old days back, and that's why we've got to do for him—it's like we'd be doing for your papa and all those good times." She rocked back and forth, staring at the open door. "I don't know who to turn to next."

"The Hermit would know what ails him," Danny said firmly.

His mother smiled and closed her eyes. "I'll bet he would, now. Why don't you go up and tell Howard to go look for him?"

"Shucks, he wouldn't go. I'd rather go my ownself."

*Illustrated by
Manning
De V. Lee*



"Where's Nancy Barr?" Danny asked. "I want to see her, not some old Howard Lovett."

His mother was lost in her thoughts behind her closed eyelids and didn't hear him; but to Danny the sudden, unpremeditated remark opened up a daring vista. He had never before thought of going into the woods alone, but until now there had not been a reason. He had been into the edge of the woods; he knew his way. If he should get lost, he would find the Hermit; everyone who got lost did find him, or his tracks; and the Hermit would lead him out again and tell him what should be done for Howard besides. Surely no one else could be as wise as a hermit! He could stop his mother's worrying, and get Howard well, and see the Hermit into the bargain; after his disappointment at seeing a Lovett, the anticipated meeting with the Hermit had taken on new importance. The Hermit would certainly be all that he expected.

Danny pictured his peg leg, that left a print as big as a bull-ring, and the way he walked on his toe, and he probably had a long gray beard and carried a stick in his hand. Danny got more and more excited about it, and went out and sat down on the front step and looked at the woods with his chin in his hands, and he thought he could see the Hermit hopping along behind the trees, and smoke from the Hermit's fire rising high on the side of Kendall Mountain; and he went down through the pasture toward the edge of the woods, walking cautiously and a little fearfully, as if drawn against his will, and telling himself he would only go to the edge and look in; and he reached the cedar swamp at the foot of the pasture and went around it and entered the woods among tall pines.

IT was dark and cold in their shade and his steps were noiseless on the floor of tan pine needles; he went on carefully, so as not to get out of sight of the sunlit pasture behind him through the trees. He came on thorn-apples, and when a partridge burst out near him, he jumped and ran headlong and stopped with his heart beating wildly, and the woods were darker and he turned in fright to run back to the open pasture; but now he could not see it through the trees behind him. Wherever he looked, there was only deeper and deeper shade and no streak of light, and he ran a little way and looked again and ran on; but the sun had gone behind Kendall Mountain, and there was no brightness left in the pasture for him to see, and he was lost.

He ran until his legs were numb and felt as if they would drop from his body like dead leaves from a tree, and he left the open footing of the pines and passed through a section thick with undergrowth and berry-

bushes where he could not run, and into young cedars where the ground was soggy under him and the low branches whipped at his face, and returned again to the pines or others like them. . . . Now it was nearly dark; even looking straight up through the treetops the sky was dark. He sat down on the floor of pine-needles, shaking and breathing deeply and crying, while the great trees around him bowed incessantly to each other, and whispered, and the darkness came in upon him from all sides.

His breath returned to him, and his sobs went away; the first fear was gone, and his inborn instinct for the woods came to command in him. Like a wild cub that is lost, his animal senses told him to stay where he was. Someone would come for him.

So he sat still for what seemed a long time, and the cold settled among the trees until he began to whimper with it. The sound of his own voice was lonely around him. He looked up and saw a star shining, while a feathery branch waved back and forth across it. The cold sent a spasm through him, and he braced himself, with his knuckles against his eyes, and then he heard Howard's voice calling far away.

He shouted in reply and stood up, trembling, hearing Howard's calls coming near and answering them, until at last he saw a light glimmering and flashing, cut off now and then by the trees, and he ran toward it, yelling.

Howard stood with his arm outstretched and his hand against a tree, leaning, resting. The light was hung on a cord around his neck, and the glow of it shot up into his face, and Danny could see his eyes glowing, hectic and feverish and exhausted.

"I was a ruddy fool to come after you in the night," Howard said, "but your mother's out of her head. I didn't think you'd be far." He stood leaning against the tree, slightly stooped, breathing heavily, looking at Danny, and he suddenly gulped a deep breath and grinned, as if he felt better.

"I came out to find the Hermit," Danny said.

"The Hermit? Oh, yes." Howard grinned again, and lowered himself to the ground to sit against the tree. "We'll rest a minute before we start back. I'm not so sure I can find the way myself. The Hermit, you said? You mean old Pegleg. I'd forgotten about him. Didn't find him, did you?"

"No."

"That's it. Nobody ever does." Howard chuckled, and Danny watched him doubtfully. Howard's eyes were bright, and his face was pale and he looked at once sick and excited, and he was more talkative than he had

ever been in the house. "That's it, you know," he repeated. "Like so many of these things. One hears of them all his life, but they're not quite real, you know."

"My papa saw his tracks."

"Yes." Howard raised his head and stared about, not seeming to see, and he said quickly: "Let's get on back home, if we can find the way. I feel all right now." He started to get up, and fell back on his haunches and said angrily, "Quite all right. I must be," and forced himself up, but staggered and fell against the tree beside him, and the electric lantern swung on its cord and hit the tree with a rap and went out.

"THE light," Howard said, "someone put out the light."

"It broke," Danny explained.

"No," Howard said oddly, "someone put it out." Danny heard his laugh in the darkness, and it came and went, and he could picture Howard turning his head from side to side, staring with his bright eyes. "By God," Howard said, chuckling again, "it could be the Hermit, couldn't it? After all, we're lost; without the light, we are lost. But there isn't any hermit, Danny. Old Pegleg's a legend: You stay here, Danny—for God's sake don't go away and get yourself lost again. Stay here. All we have to do is wait for daylight. It won't be so cold."

"I'm here," Danny said.

"That's good." There was a silence, and Danny could hear Howard scraping against the tree again, and he knew he was lowering himself to the ground again to rest. "Danny," Howard said, "if the Hermit comes, don't let him know you're scared of him. You aren't scared of him, are you?"

"No," Danny whispered. "I guess not."

"Don't let him know it if you are. That's the main thing, you know. Just take care of that, and everything's all right."

He could hear Howard breathing as the time went by; then Howard said abruptly: "Danny! Hear him, Danny?"

Danny listened, scared now in spite of himself, and whispered: "No sir."

"I do," Howard said. "He's walking this way. I can hear his peg leg, and I can hear the way he walks on his toes. He's right over there. . . . Now—listen. . . . He's circling us. He's afraid of us, just the way we're afraid of him. It's always like that, you know. Now he's looking at us; he's standing there looking at us." The pine needles rustled as Howard stood up, and Danny jumped when Howard shouted: "Pegleg! Pegleg! Here we are!"

Something whispered in reply; it might have been the trees, or a flying owl, or the sibilant voice of an old man.

"Danny," Howard said, "come over here." Danny went over to him and took hold of his hand, and Howard said to him privately: "I don't like his tone."

"I wasn't sure I heard him," Danny said.

"Pegleg," Howard repeated loudly. "Listen, Pegleg! Here we are. We're not afraid of you. Come over here and look at us."

Again there was that small, half-hidden answer, and this time it sounded more than ever like a mumbling and malicious old man; and Howard walked toward it while Danny trailed along, hanging back.

"He wants to lead us away," Howard said. "Well, that's all right, isn't it? He's got something to show us. Come along, Danny boy! Don't hold back."

A spot of moonlight lay on the ground, and Danny was sure he saw the old man hop across it, ahead of them, and the old man was talking constantly now, his voice running along before them like a breeze, and Danny could almost distinguish the words.

"I don't like this too well," Howard said softly to Danny, "but we'll see. I'm not too sure just who this Pegleg is, you know. I think I've seen him before."

At this, the Hermit, hopping along in the lead, cackled—or it could have been a dead twig falling down through the branches above them.

"Of course," Howard said, snapping his fingers, and his voice dropped to a whisper, and he bent as he walked so Danny could hear him. "He's Death, Danny," he whispered. "Of course that's who he is. I knew I'd met the beggar before. Of course he's Death."

Then he snapped his fingers again. "Hey, Pegleg!" he called, but the Hermit only threw back a string of crackling, rustling, swishing imprecations, and hopped on, going on his toe and his peg leg, with his beard streaming back over his shoulder.

"To hell with him!" Howard said gleefully. "We've got his number now, haven't we? Death and disaster and defeat and death, it's all right, once we just know who you are. Pegleg—Death. I knew I'd met him before. Never forget that ugly face. But then, he's a likable old fellow too, at times. Hey, Pegleg!" He stopped and cupped a hand to his mouth and bellowed, "Hey, Death!" and threw back his head and laughed, and the Hermit fled away and disappeared.



"Well, he's gone," Howard said, and his voice was still cheerful. "I tell you, there's nothing to it, once you recognize him. It's the not knowing part that scares you, that's all. Everything's all right now, because he's gone, you know. He can't stay in the future, you know, just in the past. You laugh him right out of the future. Come on, Danny. He's left a light ahead for us."

"There is a light," Danny said in astonishment.

"Of course there is. The old boy knows when he's licked."

"It's red," Danny said. "Why, it's a fire!"

They went on to it, Howard chuckling and talking, but almost to himself, so Danny could not understand him, and they found the light to be a dying campfire, and Danny supposed there had been coon-hunters there earlier in the evening, until Howard said in a pleased tone: "Why, it's your papa's fire, Danny. They all must be camping here, on the way to Riddle Hill. They—" His voice died away, and Danny saw him looking, with his mouth open and his head stuck forward, at a clump of young maple a few yards away, just on the edge of the firelight, and Danny saw a young woman standing there.

There was nothing about her exactly to suggest the picture of Sleeping Beauty in his book, except the bright coppery hair that hung down around her shoulders, but that was

the first thought Danny had. She looked like a princess, with her head up and smiling, and her eyes warm and gracious and pleased, the firelight flickering on her throat and her bare arms; she was wearing a man's shirt, with the sleeves rolled up, and a tan skirt, and pacs; and she held out her hands to Howard. He walked around the fire to her and took them in his own.

He exclaimed, "Nancy!" and Danny waited breathless for her to answer him, but a wind swirled through the woods to beat the fire down, for a moment, and there was the sound of a fall. When the fire flared again, the girl was gone, and Howard was lying on the ground asleep.

Howard awoke at daylight and saw that Danny had kept the fire going for warmth, and said sleepily, "Good boy!" and sat up. The sickness was gone from his eyes, Danny saw, and he was tired, but it was a healthy tiredness; there seemed to be some tension gone from him, leaving him calm and at peace and well.

"I guess I must have found you," Howard said, "and apparently had enough sense left to build a fire, but I don't know when I did it. I certainly passed out sometime."

"It was old Pegleg," Danny said. "He—"

"Pegleg?" Howard was on his feet, looking around at the woods. "Oh, you mean Pegleg the Hermit. Haven't

thought of him for years. Wonder we didn't see him last night, isn't it?"

"We did," Danny cried. "We did see him!"

"I'll bet we did, at that," Howard said, chuckling. He rubbed his knuckles in Danny's hair as he passed him, and went to the other side of the clump of young maples and looked right and left, yawning. "I may have been a fool to start out after you last night with a fever," he said, "but I don't think it did me any harm. I certainly feel fine this morning." He yawned again, stretching, still studying the terrain, and then he looked quickly around him, surprised, and said: "I thought this looked familiar! This is where we all camped one year on the way to Riddle Hill!" He looked at the landmarks again, studying them freshly, now that they were placed for him. "This is luck," he said. "I can take us straight out from here." He came and kicked out the fire, and grinned at Danny. "Seems like fate, you know, helping us to get home in time for breakfast."

They found the whole village hunting for Danny when they went in; and there was so much excitement Danny hardly recognized his house when he reached it; but the people, with a delicacy of feeling for his mother which she did not need, went away when they saw him safely in her arms.

WHEN she was done hugging him, he said: "We saw the Hermit, and Howard's well!"

"He'll be well," his mother said mysteriously, hugging him again, and crying. "He'll be well, Hermit or no Hermit. There was a message come for him last night, a cablegram, and that's how I knew you were all right too, and he's upstairs reading it now." She dried her eyes and sat back and looked at Danny and hugged him again. "Nancy Barr's going to get well," she said; "that's what the message said. What do you think of that, and coming right to the house on the night you're gone from home?" She sniffled and dabbed her face with her handkerchief. "But I knew when it come here, you'd be all right. The good won't mix with the bad, you know. Never fear of that. And now, young man, you're going to bed. March! No, don't start talking. You aint had your sleep, and you'll talk yourself to a fever."

Danny went along with her obediently. It didn't help much to try to tell people things, anyway; and his mother would just have smiled without listening if he had told her he knew Nancy Barr was well, because he had seen her in the woods, and that everything was going to be all right because the old peg-legged Hermit had run away.

THE SIX BROTHERS HAD TO BEAR UP UNDER SURPRISING NAMES—CÉZANNE, MATISSE, PICASSO, EL GRECO, GAUGUIN AND THOMAS HART BENTON MULRANEY—NAMES WISHED ON THEM BY THEIR ARTIST PARENTS. SO THEY GREW UP TO BE ROUGH AND READY FELLOWS—AS WITNESS THE EXCITING CHAPTER OF THEIR HISTORY HERE—WITH RECORDED.

by JOEL
REEVE



Roast Beef

IT was my first week-end leave, and the Five Fabulous Brothers were coming in, and Father Mulraney was giving the first family dinner to Patsy. Mother wore blue, and Patsy wore a dinner dress which showed her shoulders, and I wore my new Coast Guard uniform. It should have been a very special and private occasion, but there sat this Mr. Comack with his fine manners and his crooked smile.

We had noticed the long, low, sleek sedan at the curb, and in the hall we had seen a green scratch felt Hamburg and yellow gloves and a walking-stick, and of course we knew any sort of character is more than likely to turn up at our Eighty-ninth Street brownstone, but we hadn't thought of anyone except the family staying to dinner. We peeked in, and Mr. Comack was a man with a triangular face, slanting eyes and a suspension-bridge mustache above his ever-smiling thin lips. You could see he was a stickler and that he would not leave. You can tell them every time.

Patsy said: "After all, darling, Mother and Father miss having you lads about. No boxing, wrestling, fencing, tumbling. Not a bar-bell dropped on the floor above. They need company."

It is true that the Brothers—Picasso, Matisse, El Greco, Gauguin and Cézanne—were in pre-war days accus-

tomed to making the old house shake a bit with their muscular activities. It was their delight to commit a piece of mayhem upon my somewhat curtailed person, then attempt to escape the consequence, which was likely to take the form of a beating from Father, who loved such goings-on dearly. But this was a family affair, to celebrate the approaching nuptials of Patsy and the youngest Mulraney, and it should have been strictly private.

Father, of course, never met a stranger. Father is the greatest American painter, sometimes, but he has many muscles, none between the ears. His thinking is on the quaint side. Mother is quiet, and inclined to let Father have his way, which is a pity. But she was, and still is, Father's model, and sees him as a great man as well as the progenitor of her six sons.

She made a slight face at us as we came into the living-room and we paused to listen to Father, who had his sleeves rolled up and was declaiming.

"'Nude in Barroom' expresses a mood which was upon me in the 1930's. It was an important period in my career, and you are fortunate to be able to buy it, Mr. Comack." Father was never modest.

"Yes indeed, Mr. Mulraney," said Mr. Comack. He had a low, pleasant voice with a slight inflection.



Special

I said flatly, "'Nude in Barroom' expresses a mood after a hang-over. It is of no importance."

"Tommy!" roared Father. "Your opinion of my painting is absolutely ignorant, biased and frivolous. Furthermore, if you persist in airing your ignorance, I will be forced to beat off your ears!"

"The last time you tried that," I said, "you fell down and sprained your right wrist, and therefore I have had a certain influence upon your art, as you painted 'Nude in Radio City' with your left hand. It was better than your usual work, at that."

Father spluttered, but Mother just said: "Mr. Comack, this is Patsy Caspar and Tommy Hart Benton Mulraney. Patsy is going to marry Tommy, and I think they are lucky kids."

MR. COMACK was about thirty and wore Bond Street tweeds; and when he came forward to shake hands, he limped, as though his left leg was shorter than his right. He said: "It's nice to see you happy children! But I'm a great admirer of your father's art, Tommy."

Father said loudly: "Mr. Comack's appreciation is deep enough to allow him to see the formative worth of the earlier Mulraney's as well as the latter masterpieces. He now possesses a 'Nude' from each period of my career—"

"That's right, Mr. Mulraney," said Mr. Comack. He chuckled and added: "Perhaps I am fond of 'Nude in Barroom' because I too have hang-overs."

It was the right thing to say, and it was an occasion, so I said: "You should have bought 'Nude in Bathroom.' That's my favorite of the 1930 period."

Father laughed, and slapped me on the back hard enough to kill a steer. "He only likes the pictures Mother poses for. He's a damn' mamma's boy."

Just then they all came in, the Five Fabulous Mulraney's, like a herd of bulls, flocking around Mother, kissing Patsy until her lips were in shreds, raising a din that would deafen a stone image. They are very handsome and athletic, champions of everything; but living with them is a trial. Picasso grabbed me and hurled me through the air. Matisse caught me and slung me at El Greco, who dumped me on Gauguin, who pitched me out into the hall, where Cézanne gripped me tight and thrust a small box into my hand. I opened it, and there was one of those heavy silver

identification tags, all engraved and everything. The others were mauling Patsy and putting around her neck a string of matched pearls, almost choking her to death.

Cézanne whispered: "She's beautiful, kid. But who is the British character with the game leg?"

"Mr. Comack," I said. "He refuses to be a stranger. Is he British?"

"Walking-stick, gloves and accent," said Cézanne firmly. "British. Probably a casualty."

I said: "Thanks for the fine presents, Cezie."

"Go on, you shrimp," said Cézanne, and hustled off to pet Patsy some more. Cézanne is the fencing champion, next youngest to me among the Mulraney's.

THAT'S life at our house. Manassa, the harried remaining maid, threw open the doors to the long, narrow dining-room, and the table looked beautiful. We rushed in, roaring like a flood in a valley, and Mr. Comack wound up seated next to Mother in a seat of honor. He had wonderful presence, but I was begin-

*Illustrated by
Maurice Bower*



It was only a question of time. Mr. Comack kept saying: "Rush him, you fools. He can't get both of you at once. Dive into him."

ning to dislike this character more and more.

The soup went off all right and Manassa came staggering in under the platter which could of course hold nothing but turkey or goose, on account of food rationing. I stared at it. You could have knocked off my bulging eyes with a stick. It was a huge, dripping roast of beef.

Father was on his feet, holding a glass of wine. He shouted, "To the Coöperative Meat Company and Mr. Comack!"

The Five Brothers all looked at me. I looked blankly back at them. Patsy looked perturbed and bewildered.

Mother wore that blank expression which means that this is not her little red wagon. Mr. Comack's slanting eyes went quickly from one to the other of us brothers as he smiled and shook his head.

"Not my idea at all, you know," he said. "I just happened to know about it through a friend."

"And now we are all in," said Father happily. "Corny and Manny and Jake and Max—and some of the richest men in America. Costs us plenty, too. Wonderful deal! Buy our own cattle, raise it, slaughter it correctly, hire our own inspectors, keep the beef in careful refrigeration.

No point rationing—we control the whole works. Perfectly legitimate, too!"

"Yes indeed, Mr. Mulrancy," said Mr. Comack briefly.

We just sat there. There was no use pointing out to Father that he was contributing to inflation, illegal distribution of essential food and treasonable evasion of wartime measures. Father just doesn't understand those things. It would be like explaining international law to our little yellow brethren over yonder. We choked down some beef.

Father talked on, happy as a child with a new toy. Mr. Comack carried



the refrain. Mr. Comack was buttering Father beautifully; and if there is one thing which is bad for Father, it is agreeing with him. Mother suffered, and Patsy was thoroughly subdued. The Five Brothers resigned themselves, shrugging it off, casting side glances at me. They prefer to have me do their thinking for them if possible.

As Patsy and I were escaping to the rumpus-room upstairs, we heard Mr. Comack say for the fiftieth time: "You are absolutely *right*, Mr. Mulraney."

Patsy whispered grimly: "Do you reckon Mr. Comack got his degree at Black Market College?"

I said sharply: "Father would not knowingly patronize a black market." I was humiliated. I was baffled.

Patsy said: "All the people who are eating cheese, and we have a beef an army couldn't consume!"

"You ate it!" I said.

"To be polite, I ate a smidgeon," said Patsy with dignity.

We were quarreling. Patsy is almost as fond of Father as I am, and she was hurt at his obtuseness. The Five Brothers came tumbling up and put on some new records and danced in turn with Patsy. She pretended to enjoy it, flirting with Cézanne more than the others. My heart shrank to

a nubbin, and I went downstairs into the hall, aimlessly, listening to Mr. Comack yessing Father.

I picked up his walking-stick. It was malacca, but curiously heavy. I stared at his hat and gloves for a long moment. The bitterness was receding, and I was beginning to ponder.

I drifted into the back of the house and found the refrigerator some salesman had wished on Father a couple of years ago, one of those newfangled deals which keeps things indefinitely, all chromium and steel and porcelain. It was certainly full of dead cow.

I EXAMINED the meat: it seemed clean. It was even stamped in blue ink, "*Co-op Meat Co.*" I shuddered and went back through the hall and out upon Eighty-ninth Street.

Mr. Comack, I perceived, was a man who knew how to live in wartime. His expensive motorcar was new and shiny. It bore an A card, but when I took a look at the gas-tank, I knew it must be full to the brim. I had a pocket flash Patsy had given me, and when I turned it on the tires, I saw that they were six-ply, scarcely used pre-war Bax Cords. I opened the rear door and poked my head in and sniffed at the luxurious upholstery. There was a certain faint odor.

I backed out and turned off my flash. Eighty-ninth Street became very dark. The dim-out made the tall rows of houses seem even more ancient, and the city was like olden times, I thought, before electricity, a cozy place to live in; and then for a moment I forgot everything but New York and its greatness and its relation to the greatness of the United States. I sucked in the air, loving the place of my nativity, hushed now, but ready to spring to life at the touch of a switch or the dawn of a new day.

Indoors the Five Fabulous Mulranays made the night riotous, and the sound came down through blacked-out windows. I heard Patsy laugh on a clear note, and my love went out to her, and I regretted my hasty words and was about to go in and make amends. Then the door opened and Mr. Comack said: "Of course you are *right*, Mr. Mulraney—"

I opened the rear door of the sedan. Father was booming fond farewells to his new friend. I slipped inside the tonneau and scrouged up close to the front seat. I heard Mr. Comack come across the walk, very rapidly, his stick going *tap, tap, tap*. I was conscious of having done a foolish, impulsive, asinine thing.

We moved along very rapidly. Mr. Comack whistled under his breath. He was a very good whistler, and I found myself humming silently and trying to remember the name of the tune. We went lurching around a



"Now this is truly unfortunate."

few corners; and then, quite unexpectedly soon, we bumped once and slid to a stop.

Mr. Comack was slow getting out, and for a moment I thought I was discovered and almost sat up straight. But in a moment he whistled himself out of hearing, and I relaxed, to find myself quite moist and shaky. It took me a while to get up nerve to climb out of the sedan and follow. I was still trying to remember the name of the melody—it was quite simple, and every child should recognize it.

WE were, it developed, in an alley, somewhere close to the North River. The warehouses stretched in all directions, and were tumbledown and in disuse. Mr. Comack's cane did not tap, but I could hear his footsteps. A light shone briefly, then went out. I came to a closed door.

I backtracked, feeling my way along a crumbling brick wall. I found another door on my left, and it opened without protest. Within was a sort of loft, and my flashlight picked out dusty piles of junk which had lost significance with time. I came to a partition, and beyond it were voices.

A wooden door separated my room from the next, and through a crack came a sliver of light. I put my eye to the aperture and beheld a section of Mr. Comack's tweeds, a fleeting

view of a man with bat ears, and the bared arm of a colored giant. My nostrils were assaulted with the odor of dead cow.

Mr. Comack spoke decisively, very unlike his manner at our house. "Put the stamp on it. Clean it up and deliver it to this list of places."

The bat-eared man said hoarsely: "It looks good, Boss, but I aint sure of these animals."

"Nonsense, Beek," said Mr. Comack very sharply. "They were perfectly healthy."

"They looked kinda peaked. Not that I know much about cows. But Knockers, here, he says—"

"Move them out of here," snapped Mr. Comack. "We shall not have to make any further deliveries to these people. Soon we shall move to another place."

"Whaffor?" demanded Beek. "Where you gonna get a better town than this? The dough is here; the people's used to havin' stuff and will give."

Mr. Comack said: "You needn't move, Beek. You can stay." There was ice in his voice, and the big Negro sucked in his breath sharply, and Beek was silent.

The impact of what was taking place in that filthy room was like a poke in the stomach. Covered trucks could dump any sort of cattle into the blind alley; the two men killed and dressed it; the customers who thought they were the Cooperative Meat Company were paying through the nose for any sort of beef Mr. Comack could pilfer or buy from dishonest farmers. This was the great clean outfit with its hired inspectors! This was the

"legitimate" by-passing of the OPA ruling on meat.

But somewhere was a flaw. Mr. Comack was too perfect. Even the take from Father and his gullible friends could not quite explain Mr. Comack and his big car and his gasoline galore and his impeccable get-up. Such polish did not belong to the underworld. My mind was going rapidly over the facets of the situation when Mr. Comack whistled himself toward the door behind which I was concealed. I had scarcely time to leap behind one of the dusty piles of crates.

MR. COMACK came through and carefully closed the wooden door behind him. Then he pressed hard, and the thin edge of light which had first attracted me went out. There was, I perceived, a buttress to that wooden portal, a metal cover which fitted snugly behind Mr. Comack's retreating, neat form.

I saw his shadow, dimly, at the far end of the warehouse. I moved, and the boxes creaked. I stopped and was silent for long moments. Then Mr. Comack moved again and I crept forward, making as little noise as a mouse—or at any rate a small rat.

I was going along fine when the glare of a large flash-lamp hit me squarely between the eyes. I staggered, blinded. Mr. Comack said in his pleasant voice: "Now this is truly unfortunate."

He had a gun, an automatic pistol. It was correctly pointed at my middle, and he stood too far away for me to try Dempsey's trick of taking it away. I tried hard to overcome the sense of utter foolishness which assailed me and said: "Mr. Comack, this is outrageous. Father will be horrified."

Mr. Comack said, "Your mother and your lovely fiancée will also be unhappy. It is too bad."

"And you an Englishman!" I went on. "This is directly against the war effort, you know. You should be doubly ashamed. I cannot understand such actions—"

"Talk!" said Mr. Comack wearily. "I have heard so much talk from Mul-raneys! Much as I regret what must happen, it will be a relief not to talk and listen to talk."

"Black markets are undermining the nation," I said. I had to talk, to do anything which would kill time. "You take advantage of people like Father, who are childishly trusting. You have been very clever, involving all those other big men. I suppose it would be difficult to prosecute you without involving them; but when they find out your revolting methods, they will surely turn you in. I advise you to leave town at once, Mr. Comack, and avoid a great deal of unpleasantness."

Mr. Comack said, "The naïveté of you Americans is fantastic."

"It is," I agreed. "We have jitter-bugs, swing, zoot suits. We have Hollywood, drugstore libraries, alphabetical bureaucracies and union racketeers. We are an overgrown youngster among nations. You cannot tell me anything about America, Mr. Comack. I am a student of the scene. But did you ever feel the muscles of America, Mr. Comack?"

"Ah, yes," he sighed. "Disgusting, isn't it? And now if you are quite through maundering, shall we join my friends in the other room? I suppose you know all about the other room. . . . Pardon me, but you did come in the rear of my car, did you not?"

"Yes," I said. "I forgot to mention that America is also a nation of hitchhikers."

"You were a promising young man." He nodded. In the reflection of his strong light his face was now harshly angular, and his eyebrows pointed toward his dark hair like steeples. The pistol did not waver in the least, and he was calm as an iceberg. My former premonition that I had been a dunce was proven eminently correct. He said: "Just turn around and lock your hands behind your head. Then walk slowly forward."

He began to whistle again as I obeyed. The light danced ahead, and he remained the correct distance to prevent a whirling rear dive at his knees. He knew all the tricks. I set my eyes on the metal door and thought hard.

He had to move to my right to open it. He grunted, pulling on a lever or something. I watched the opening grow slowly wider, saw that the wooden door beyond was slightly ajar

ALL the Mulraneys have one gift in common. It comes from training in ballet, in tap-dancing, acrobatics, sports. We are all able to move very quickly and without warning. When the door was just wide enough opened to give me room, I leaped forward and through it, hitting the wooden portal and bounding into the center of the abattoir on the other side. It must have seemed to Mr. Comack that I had vanished, for I had a second or two out of the menace of his gun.

The two big minions surveyed me as though I were a small ghost. Then Beek spotted my uniform and howled: "The cops!"

There was enough in that call to stun them a further second, and I seized a mop which leaned against the door. The handle unscrewed like a dream, and as the colored man sprang at me, I was able to get it into the old quarterstaff position which I

had been taught during my Robin Hood period. I gave the Negro the butt, right in the jaw, and he went down.

Mr. Comack came through with his pistol, but I was waiting for him even as I watched Beek pick up a piece of iron pipe. I gave Mr. Comack the thrust of the end, and his gun clattered away on the slippery floor.

The mop-handle was far too light in weight for real stave work. The best I could do to Beek was rap his knuckles, but he dropped the iron pipe. I tried to get back to wallop Mr. Comack, but he was moving very rapidly, and of course I had to move too, for Knockers was soon up and at me. We went around and around, and only my speed afoot saved me.

It was only a question of time. Mr. Comack kept saying in a sharp, unexcited voice: "Rush him, you fools. He can't get both of you at once. Dive into him."

They came in, finally, from two angles, both going low, big men, strong and avid of grasping me firmly in their strong hands, where I would be a gone goose. I chose Knockers and gave him the lower end, then tried to come up under Beek's jaw. Mr. Comack was looking around the floor for his pistol.

I managed with the colored man, thrusting him off stride. I tried side-

stepping—and would have made it, too, but the floor was slippery from cattle blood and my heels went. Beek's shoulder bunted me into the corner, and the mop-handle flew away and slapped against the door to the alleyway.

Mr. Comack said: "Hold him till I get the gun, Beek."

Beek was coming right on. I put my back against the wall and made ready to give him both feet in a last attempt. It was not worth a nickel, and I knew it. I had been a very great dunce to attempt to handle Mr. Comack alone.

SOMEONE yelled: "Tommy! Darling, where are you?" The door banged open. Patsy rushed in, then Cézanne, who stopped in leisurely fashion and picked up the mop-handle under his feet.

Cézanne said: "Uh—hello, Mr. Comack. What's all this?"

Mr. Comack stopped looking for his pistol. He stepped over to the corner and snatched up his yellow cane. I ducked around Beek and howled: "Look out, Cezie! He's a killer!"

I made Beek miss in desperation now, and then he had me, with one hand, holding me. Mr. Comack's cane twirled, came apart. It became a sword which he handled expertly, going toward Cézanne.



The door banged open and Patsy rushed in, then Cézanne.

Patsy said: "Tommy! What is this?" Then she picked up the piece of iron pipe and hammered it on the head of Knockers, who had just moved. She came straight on, heading for Beek. The bat-eared man swung me about for a shield, and there we were, in a merry-go-round ballet; and there was Cezie, armed with a mop-handle, facing Mr. Comack's sword-cane.

I got glimpses of it. Mr. Comack was not limping now. Cézanne, being fencing champion, instinctively fell *en garde* in *carte* with the mop-handle. Mr. Comack brought his right hand to his left shoulder with his blade at a perpendicular edge to the left. Cézanne turned his wrist and put himself in tierce.

Mr. Comack launched with the full force of arm and body, intending to finish it upon the spot. Cézanne bent like a sapling, a foolish grin upon his handsome face. The blow came in. Cézanne's iron wrist turned; he raised his elbow and thrust with the blunt end of the mop-handle, and just then Beek swung at me again.

But I heard the sword-cane fly away, and I knew that old disarming trick of Cézanne's, and joy gave me strength, and I held Beek one moment. Patsy swung, and down came the iron pipe, and away went Beek into dreamland.

CÉZANNE said: "That was pretty comical. Do it again, I missed the first part."

Mr. Comack was against the wall, nursing his elbow. His face had broken from a triangle form and was twisted with pain. He seemed resting, waiting, watching me. Cézanne said: "What makes with these characters, Tommy? They play rough, huh?"

I said: "This is Father's great co-operative company."

Cézanne peered about. He said: "Some joint, huh, kids? You mean Mr. Comack is from black market? Tut-tut!"

"He's dangerous, Ceziel!" I said. "He's not British. I can tell. . . . And there's something secret over in that other loft. He was heading for it when he caught me—"

Mr. Comack made a break for it. I had been hoping he would do that when I began to speak. I jumped into his way and belted him with two lefts, came inside and crossed the right. I was remembering how scared I had been when he was holding that pistol on me and planning my immediate demise. I tried him with a couple of hooks, but he was tough. So I planted a right on the button and threw him the kiss-off with a long left. He went through the broken door and skidded off the platform and into outer darkness.

Cézanne said: "Now you've gone and thrown him away."

But in a moment there was Mr. Comack, right back at our feet. And there was Father and Mother and the other brothers. And Father was saying: "Is that Mr. Comack? Tommy, what do you mean, practicing your commando tricks on our guest?"

I said: "He's a German, Cezie. He kept whistling 'Tannenbaum,' and at first I couldn't think, and then I thought it was 'Maryland.' He wears a green Homburg scratch felt and puts his yellow gloves inside it. His limp—it's a fake, with one shoe built up the way the movie actors do both. . . . See what's in the other room, Ceziel!"

Cézanne said: "I hate to miss Father's face when he sees the high-class slaughterhouse." But he went.

They were all crowding in, staring around. Then everyone was looking at Father, who cleared his throat and said: "Well! There seems to have been—er—an error. This is indeed not salubrious. This is shocking. Mr. Comack! Explain yourself!"

Mr. Comack said: "Ug. Glub." He spat out a tooth.

Cézanne came barging back and said happily: "Some fun, kids! Radio set. Short-wave! We been wondering where it was Mr. Comack had it."

Father said sternly: "Come now, boys! Enough is enough! It is evident that we were mistaken about the—er—the Coöperative Meat Company. But do not, please, try to tell me that Mr. Comack is a German spy! Why, it's impossible! The man had dinner with us, did he not?"

I took Patsy away. We went outside, and I held onto her very tight. I said: "I'm sorry I spoke the way I did. I love you so much, and I felt so bad about the black market and Father."

She said: "Shhh! Cézanne said you would be after Comack. We watched you climb into the car. We saw you examine it and knew you were suspicious. Cézanne said just let you go and you would solve the whole thing. Then we could follow at our leisure. And I believed him, and you might have been killed!"

"Killed?" I said. "Nothing can kill me! We're not married yet. I couldn't die before we got married, could I?"

So we laughed, and then everything was all right for us. And the photographers came and took pictures of the Five Fabulous Mulraneys, and Father made a speech to the police, warning them that they should be more careful of black markets. And that was the end of it.

But Father is pretending to love cheeseburgers these days, and the very sight of a roast beef in pictures makes him ill.

What Our

A YEAR OF BATTLE

I WAS an aerial-gunner on a B17 in the Philippines when the war broke out. A member of the 93rd Bomb Squadron of the now famous 19th Bomb. Group, I flew throughout the entire Philippine and Java campaigns, and up to November 12, 1942, in the Australian campaign. I have many memories—most of them unhappy! I can remember my buddy Blanton, from some place in Mississippi, a good-natured kid with a big heart and a wide smile. He used to do my work for me when I wasn't feeling so good. I hope that some day he will get his chance to indulge in nice clothes and mint juleps again. He is missing on Bataan.

I can remember Sergeants Rex Matson, Micky Czechowski and "Oe" Oettel also—three of the best gunners that ever caressed a machine-gun and watched a Zero go down in smoke. They got theirs with Captain Harl Pease, awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. All are missing in action.

Rex, Micky, Oe and I got split up in Australia, the three of them staying in the 93rd, I going into the 30th Squadron, same Group. I next saw them at a town in Northern Australia, when we were all slated for the same bombing raid. Shoulders were well thumped, beer flowed freely. Nothing mattered, for we were all together again.

I can remember, too, trying to calm down a man whose buddy had been shot down. It's no fun trying to calm down a fellow wild with grief, when you're crying yourself. The kid who went down had been a good buddy of mine also.

There was the day Johnny Sowa and Art Karlinger went down. They were landing at our field in Java when we were hit by strafers. They didn't have a chance. One straffer was shot down; we think Johnny got it; but it was curtains for the crew.

In a particularly savage battle over the Makassar Straits I blew apart a Zero that sat off our tail and gave every indication of sitting there until someone went down. He did! Throughout the scrap Rex alternately shouted encouragement, advice and

Do You Think?

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a choice selection of cusswords because of his inability to get a decent shot. We had a party in town that night. There are not too many of us left who attended that party.

There was the day I got released from the hospital. After saying hello and passing the time of day with a few of the boys, I heard they needed a gunner for a mission going out. Figuring it was time I compensated the Air Force for my board and keep, and not having flown for three weeks, it was time to make amends. I reported to Lieutenant Hancock, pilot of the ship short a gunner, and asked how's about a ride? Disgusted to find out that he had just given another gunner the place, I went over to bother the cooks. Lieutenant Hancock is missing in action.

Things get rather mixed up at times. I don't hear too much grumbling here in the States; but occasionally when I do hear someone whine plaintively, when I hear of strikes and dissension among workers and employers, when innumerable things happen which make me realize that some people refuse to realize that war is a grim deadly business, it makes me think. It makes me think of Curly-top Blanton; of Rex, who was always looking for something to eat or a drink. Of the men whom I've known and loved as brothers that are now buried on Bataan, shot down over Java or feeding sharks around the islands of New Guinea. It makes me wonder what they would think.

*S/Sgt. Lewis L. Coburn,
(Silver Star, Order of the Purple
Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster, Dis-
tinguished Flying Cross with Oak
Leaf Cluster, Soldiers' Medal.)*

THE WOMAN AND THE JOB

THE first, last and *only* consideration is speedy, victorious peace; but when that is accomplished, it seems to me America will be facing the most serious reconstruction period in her history.

During the depression years many married women, most of whose husbands were employed, but at reduced salaries that did not enable them to provide the luxuries they were accustomed to, got jobs. Married women,

working for luxuries, can work cheaper than we single women, wholly dependent upon our own resources.

Then came the war; and women were urged, as a patriotic duty, to take jobs in defense plants, at exorbitant wages. While our soldiers are enduring privations and risking their lives for fifty dollars a month, some families are drawing several times that amount, every *week*, in defense plants. Most of these women are thoroughly sold on the idea of working, and have no intention of going back to the monotony of housework, when the war is over.

Now Uncle Sam is drafting eighteen- and nineteen-year-old boys. For the most of these boys, schooldays will end when they are inducted into service. They will come out of the war, those who *do* come out, mature men. Some of them will be physically incapacitated for hard work. For many others, work will be their salvation, not only from a financial standpoint, but for a return to the normalcy of peace time.

Now what I am thinking is—what chance will we single women, entirely dependent upon a job, and boys who have sacrificed education and boyhood ambitions to defend their country, have if married women are allowed to keep their jobs after the war, as many are now planning to do?

*Gladys E. McArdle,
Kirwin, Kansas.*

What Do You Think?

Most of us are interested to know how the other fellow looks upon or solves his personal dilemmas. And with this idea in mind, we would welcome letters from you, our readers, telling us what you are thinking about—about your business now or your career after the war; the war's effect on you or those dear to you; or if you are in one of the armed Services, a letter which would interest your fellow-readers on your recent experiences or expectations for the future—these within the censorship regulations, of course.

We will pay twenty-five dollars for each letter bought by us. No letters will be returned. All letters submitted will become the property of McCall Corporation. Address: "What Do You Think?" Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Avenue, New York, N. Y.

TO SAVE MY BOY

I WAS putting away my son's civilian clothes. It was hard to believe he had gone away to war as just last year he was trudging to high school with his books slung over his shoulder. I gently caressed the suits and football togs he loved. There was a catch in my throat as I wondered when he'd be wearing them again. And then the horrid thought came, as it has probably come to millions of other mothers: suppose he never wears them again?

Everything else—every trivial worry paled into insignificance beside that tragic possibility. And as I folded away his gay-colored ties accumulated from many Christmases and put shoe trees in his shoes, I got to thinking of all the other boys like mine, young and beloved—fighting, suffering, dying for their country in the far-flung battlefronts of the world.

I began examining my own conscience.

It was no use trying to fool myself that I "gave" my son. He "gave" himself because he knew it was the only thing for him to do since to the youth of this generation falls the obligation. And then I thought the least we "stay-at-homers" can do is to give the boys the guns, tanks, planes and ships they must have to conquer . . . and live. And the more and faster we get them, the sooner our boys will come home and the fewer will be the white crosses on the battlefields.

I thought how precious my son's life was to me and knew millions of other mothers felt the same way about their boys. And suddenly my whole conception of War Bonds changed. I saw them not so much as a financial investment in future security but as an investment in the very lives of boys like my own Sonny. Then the realization came that nothing else counts. War Bonds must come first. Every last dollar I can scrimp and save must go into bonds to save my boy. I'm going to cut every corner I possibly can and buy till it hurts. And I can easily do without that lovely print dress I've set my heart on. It might do a lot for me but a bond would do a lot more for my boy.

And so I kissed the worn place at the elbow of Sonny's old football sweater as I folded it away, with a prayer in my heart that went something like this: "Dear God, watch over him, and if it is Your will that he return—let me be able to look him in the eye confident that I've done all I could to bring him back."

*Mrs. Minnette H. Miller,
Charlotte 3, North Carolina.*

WAR'S COMPENSATIONS

AT fourteen, he was taken before the Juvenile Judge and placed on a year's probation. Six months later he stole an automobile. This time, he was sentenced to a Boys' Industrial School for a year. He really wasn't a bad lad. But somehow he had got a bad start.

I remember that our parents forbade us to associate with his brothers and sisters. In our small Midwestern town, with its conventions of the mid-twenties, this lad and his family were considered part of the social backwater. Oh, yes, there were others, likewise long forgotten, as indeed this lad was—until the publication of a recent casualty list from the South Pacific war theater.

The lad had died a hero. Today his name is inscribed on the mind of every man and woman in that little community where he and his family were once ostracized. He, and others like him, gave his life so that our concepts of government may continue. That so costly a sacrifice should have to be made to attain immortality in the minds of those of us who are left behind is, of course, the great tragedy of war. Viewed in that light, perhaps there evolves from warfare no adequate compensation.

Not all pay the supreme price. Another lad in this little community, a youth known for his indolence and spendthrift careless ways, lured by the spirit of adventure, joined the Air Corps and was later cited for conspicuous gallantry. The United Press carried a long story about this man's extraordinary heroism. I, for one, and I am sure there are others, never dreamed of this youth possessing the stuff of which valor is made. It took the tragedy of war to lift him from nonentity to fame.

Because war demands the greatest of sacrifices, it brings out the greatest assets of character. From the crossroads, the towns, and the cities of America this conflict has taken up the humble and unknown and of them created national heroes. In the course of things as they were, recognition to many of these young men would have come in no other way. And even to those who do not become heroes the discipline and the sacrifice demanded

of them by the rigors of military experience will serve as adequate background for success in future life.

In the midst of the tragedy of World War One, the late James Oliver Curwood, famous novelist, who was certainly not without human compassion, wrote that war carries its own spiritual and material compensations. Most of these are seen only in the clearer perspective of postwar reflection. But it seems that it might be beneficial for those of us who ponder the present tragedy of war to contemplate occasionally the compensations being offered, though indeed they shall always be inadequate.

*Graham C. Whitehead,
Michigan.*

A WORRIED SAILOR

HERE'S another worried sailor doing a little thinking out loud. My dad is a doctor. I am an only son. He had no other thought but that I would follow in his footsteps and I had no other plan. But just as I stepped out with my high school diploma, America stepped into the global war. I saw my duty and enlisted as soon as I could.

After my boot training, I was sent to a southern naval aviation technical training center to study aviation mechanics—something I would only follow in war-time. Still it's a job I must do to help win this war and I'm studying hard and giving it all I've got. I'm working harder than I ever worked in my life—getting up at day-break—going to bed with the chickens (and I do mean the feathered variety). I'm not griping about that. It's nothing to what the lads on the fighting fronts are undergoing. But here's the rub. While this war cannot end too soon for any of us, it may last for several years before the peace is won—for the job has got to be finished this time.

Now if it does last for years and I come through it safe and sound—will I be able to sit down at a prosaic desk like a schoolboy after having seen battle and bloodshed in the far-flung corners of the earth? After having been regimented and missing so much of normal living—will I be in the mood to concentrate on years of serious study? The way I feel now, I don't think I could do it—and yet it has been the dream of my dad's life to have my name on his office door.

Lots of fellows like me, whose educations have been interrupted, are going to have to face this problem when the war is over. Maybe it is foolish to cross bridges before you get to them, but still—I cannot help wondering.

*Arthur I. Miller (S 2/c),
Jacksonville, Florida.*

FROM AN OLD-TIMER

I AM a retired newspaper man, experienced in publicity and personal relations work, spending three decades in the work. In my eightieth year I am capable of as good work in those lines as I ever was, but despite my long experience I am shunted aside by less experienced men in my lines, because of the fool notion that a man's usefulness seems to have ended at forty-five or fifty. What I would like to know is why Uncle Sam refuses to avail himself of my proved services and release some youngster for active military duty?

Old as I am, there are those who do not take into account my age, for during the past two years I have written numerous articles for technical magazines, assisted in organizing two or three publicity campaigns in the interest of war activities, conducted a season of Sunday evening songfests attended by thousands, and spent a couple of vacations proving that I could match the best fishermen at the sport. In my seventy-eighth year I made an active campaign for a State office, and despite the tremendous Republican landslide, I led the Democratic State ticket by many thousands. But it seems that I am too old to render worth-while service to my country in its dire need.

So what must we oldsters do? Just sit around in the shade and watch the procession go by? Must we who know how to perform really important war jobs stand aside and watch them being bungled by a lot of youngsters who should be fighting instead of lolling back in swivel-chairs? I do not need a job. I owe no man a dollar, and I have enough to live on in comfort after paying my taxes. My only worry is about being barred from active participation in the war. It is not enough to say that paying my taxes is war work. I paid them when we were not at war.

I believe that we oldsters who are still capable of doing real work despite our age should be given more consideration, instead of being shunted aside and offered a place on the relief rolls. All I ask is an opportunity to work for Uncle Sam in my chosen lines. If I fail to make good, I will bow out gracefully, thanking him for the opportunity of being allowed to try. What a calamity it would have been to the world if Gladstone, Beethoven, Holmes, Franklin, and many others, had been compelled to seek their solitary firesides at the age of fifty or sixty! Of course I am not comparing myself with them; just calling attention to the fact that age is not the only thing that counts.

*Will M. Maupin,
Clay Center, Nebraska.*

The AFFAIR of the UNFINISHED SEARCH

"Quest, Inc.," solves a strange post-war mystery

IVARSON answered the phone. The big boss was calling. "Ivarson? I wish you'd get File Q811,754," said Steven Luring, the president of Quest, Incorporated. "Bring it up to my office in fifteen minutes. That'll give you time to glance over it. And when you get here, keep mum."

Ivarson jotted down the file-number. As a field agent of Quest, Inc., he had the right to requisition any file. The one in question was brought to his desk, and he dipped into it swiftly. Nothing unusual rewarded his search.

In the final year of the Last War—two summers ago, now—a plane from New York to Moscow had disappeared over Norway, presumably caught by raiders from the Nazi air base at the

North Cape. With her vanished General Corliss and two other members of an air mission to Moscow. One of the two was Colonel Frier, the famed electronics expert.

After the war, when Quest, Incorporated, was beginning its meteoric rise in the curious business of finding lost and mislaid persons, it was engaged by the new commercial Strato Airways to establish the death of Colonel Frier, who had owned large

*by
Gordon
Keyne*



Ivarson felt those broken-nailed hands clawing at him, sinking into his throat. He fought in a frenzy.



Ivarson looked up. "You! His brother, you say?"

amounts of stock in the various lines that made up Strato. Quest had investigated. The remnants of the plane were found among the mountains of Norway, and by a remarkable bit of work, the bodies of all occupants save one were recovered. They had parachuted and were scattered over a great area. The only one missing was that of Sergeant Jan Moller, of the Free Norse air force, who had been Frier's orderly. So the case was closed.

IVARSON, a Minnesota man of Norse parentage, remembered the prestige that Quest had gained from this success. It had led directly to international business and the establishment of offices everywhere. The frightful cataclysms of the war had affected every nation. Men and women had disappeared by wholesale in mass deportations or the merciless campaigns or upheavals of global conflict. Nowhere else in history had human life been so cheap or destruction so widespread; the importance of the individual had dwindled to nothing. On this was founded the vast and lucrative business of Quest, Incorporated.

It was Colonel Frier, Ivarson recalled, who had contrived those remarkable electronic detectors for the United States Army, by which the pulsation of an airplane engine could be heard and even more accurately located at a distance of many miles than with the original radar devices. Suddenly he glanced at his watch, jumped up, gathered the papers of the file together, and hastily made his way to the president's office. Two men were engaged with Steven Luring.

"Just in time," said Luring. "Mr. Ivarson, gentlemen, our agent who will handle the case. Ivarson, this is Mr. Buckmaster, president of Strato Airways, and Mr. Stanton of Consolidated Freight Transport."

The two most important air executives in America! Ivarson shook hands, dropped into a chair, and kept mum as ordered. On the wall was hung one of the huge air geography maps which had replaced the old world-maps, displaying only the location of air centers and the stratosphere routes of post-war commerce. Buckmaster motioned at it.

"Here's the basis of our problems, Luring. As you know, immediately

after the war, the London Air Congress halted the threatened fight for control of the air by an equitable temporary division of routes and territory served. But a permanent basis has never been reached, and now trouble is brewing. God knows, nobody wants control of the air! At least, we don't; what we need, and must have, is the use of various international bases."

"Exclusive use?" queried Luring.

"Not at all!" snapped Stanton. "But there are others who do demand the exclusive use. And we're in the air age now, full tilt. It would be ruinous were various national interests to clash over the tremendous world transport business. Fortunately, legal interpretations are still recognized. Come to the point, Buckmaster!"



The latter nodded. "The late Colonel Frier," he said, "foresaw the problems of this air age and was quietly taking action to resolve them when he died. He had obtained post-war leases and agreements covering many of the bases constructed abroad by the United States, guaranteeing our use of them after the war. Not exclusive use, mind. But if others now try to shut us out, those agreements would be of the highest value to us."

"On the trip to Moscow when he died," put in Stanton, "he was putting through certain negotiations with the Soviets covering the use of bases in Siberia and Russia. He had the prior agreements with him at the time—the original signed agreements, of which no other copies existed. And they were lost with that plane. And for

lack of them, we're up against it! There y'are."

"But, gentlemen," protested Luring, "Quest recovered the remains of those men, and of the plane itself."

"FRIER'S briefcase, containing the agreements, was never found," said Buckmaster. "Nor was the body of his orderly, Sergeant Jan Moller, who presumably carried it. That's why we've come to you again."

"Yes? You must have had some direct reason to do so," Luring said shrewdly.

The two visitors nodded, somewhat reluctantly. "I fear it sounds fantas-

tic," said Buckmaster. "Dammit, it is fantastic! It's all cockeyed, Luring! It makes sense to us, but would to nobody else, I fear!"

"Let's have it," said Luring.

Stanton took up the word. "Okay. A German company has put on the market some television equipment containing electronic tubes of an entirely new pattern. Frier, at the time of his death, was working upon these exact tubes. We've discovered that the man behind this German company is a Dr. Stensrud, a physician, not an inventor. He is a Norwegian. He comes from Torsen, a town north of Bergen, though now he spends much of his time in Hamburg, where this German company is located."

Luring waited, with a slightly puzzled look. Buckmaster now struck in.

"If you recall, the ruins of that plane were found well north of Ber-

gen, on the coast, but the occupants had parachuted from a great height and had scattered far, none surviving. It's a wild mountain district, containing the largest glacier in Europe, the Jostedal. One of those passengers was not found: Sergeant Moller, a Norwegian. Suppose he carried Frier's briefcase. Suppose his body—"

"Or the man himself!" interjected Stanton.

"Had been found by Stensrud," pursued Buckmaster. "He may still be alive."

"In that case, his family in Norway would know it," Luring said.

Stanton nodded.

"We've tried that. They've never heard from him. We have a little data here on Dr. Stensrud and on Sergeant Moller, descriptions and so on. Do you see what we're driving at?"

"Certainly. It's not so fantastic," said Luring. "This Stensrud might have found the briefcase containing Frier's data on his tubes, and might be making capital of it."

"What we want, what we must have, are those agreements!" exclaimed Buckmaster, with energy. "Can Quest do it?"

"Quest can do anything," said Luring, and glanced at Ivarson. "Well?"

"The New York-Moscow clipper leaves at seven tonight," Ivarson said laconically. "It goes *via* Bergen. I'd get there in the morning."

"Grab it. Miss Smith will see to tickets and expense money."

Ivarson nodded to the visitors and walked out. He gathered that Luring wanted to drive a hard bargain with the clients, and this was none of his business.

LATER Luring sent him the data on his possible prey. A wartime photo of Moller showed him as a young but scarred and heavy-chinned sergeant, with a queer look in the eyes that Ivarson did not like.

The physician, Dr. Stensrud, was a man of early middle age, energetic, forceful and direct. He had studied medicine in Germany, long before the war, returning to practice in Torsen. He was not too well liked in general. During the Nazi occupation he had been suspected of quisling sentiments, but the charges had been dropped and the rumors forgotten, later: in fact, Stensrud had saved a number of Norse refugees from Nazi fury.

"Hm! Buckmaster was dead right," thought Ivarson. "It's cockeyed as hell."

He made his plane, one of the Europa Line—speedy but comfortable ships, equipped with the silent engines evolved during the last days of the war from alloy metals. As the air map above his seat showed, the direct

route led over Greenland and Iceland to Bergen, but this had no interest for him; he was thinking ahead. Before nine o'clock, he had radio-phoned on and made full arrangements, after which he turned in and slept.

Ivarson had never been in Norway, though he had remembered the language from childhood. He was of medium height, well knit, with the quiet eyes of a scholar and a certain dogged firmness of feature; this quality of relentless and undeviating pursuit made him invaluable to Quest. His singleness of purpose, his stubborn keeping to the end in view and disregard of obstacles, combined with an active intelligence to keep his record unblemished. No failures were chalked up against him. Yet he was by no means an impressive person at first sight. One had to know Ivarson to appreciate what a bloodhound he was on the trail.

The trip was completed without incident. In the early morning the Clipper swooped down upon Bergen, cupped among its seven mountains, and settled on the surface of the long Lungegaards Lake, whose waters pierced well into the city itself to make a magnificent approach for seaplanes. It taxied to the landing, and Ivarson stepped ashore.

In accord with post-war handling, all customs and passport regulations had been seen to at the port of departure. The car ordered by Ivarson was waiting, an old but sturdy vehicle, being part of the enormous stock of motorized equipment abandoned by the Nazis in their evacuation of Norway. The driver was one Petterson, a bearded, elderly man, who singled out Ivarson.

The latter shook hands, threw his bag into the car, and got in.

"You can drive me to Torsen?" he inquired.

Petterson smiled. "Hardly. One must cross the Sogne Fiord. But all arrangements are made. I drive you to Ortnavik, and a boat will be waiting there."

"Let's go. Do you know of any place I can stay at Torsen?"

This was a problem, for it was a little hamlet. The enormous flood of tourists that had descended upon post-war Norway was splendid for her prosperity, but the mountainous back-country was not equipped to handle such crowds. Towns with tourist hotels abounded along the reaches of the mighty glacier, but Torsen was out of the way, a fishing village. It was no point of departure for one wishing to see the glacier, said Petterson.

This Ivarson knew already, and was prepared to cope with it later. First he must get a direct line on Dr. Stensrud, who was now in Torsen for the summer.

Late afternoon saw him leaving the fishing boat that had carried him across and down the fiord, at the village under its craggy cliffs. Petterson had given him a note of introduction to a relative here. He had no difficulty in locating a family willing to take him in as a boarder for a few days.

So he settled down, and during the next four days got close to his job—he did absolutely nothing; but he absorbed information like a sponge.

THE enormous glacier that ran to seven thousand feet and occupied five hundred square miles, was not a mere sheet of ice. It was a jumble of rocks and frightful fissures and trees, a bleakly savage mountain country, with dozens of smaller glaciers pushing out from the central mass—a district empty of human life and tremendously difficult of access. The ranks of those who knew the country, professional guides and climbers, had been thinned almost to nothing by the war, which had left half Norway unpeopled.

Twice Ivarson met Dr. Stensrud, who was the local checker champion, but had given up the practice of medicine. A hearty, vigorous man, the good Doctor lived alone except for a housekeeper, in a chalet at the upper end of the village. He was a great walker and climber. Knapsack on back, he would be gone for a week or two at a time, climbing into the craggy vastness of the Jostedal, although to get there he had to go up the fiord to Vadheim and then overland to Vik and the North Fiord.

On the fourth day of his stay, Ivarson heard that the Doctor had fared forth again on one of his trips. That afternoon he was at the wharves watching the fishing boats, when the mail-boat came in, and with it a stranger who inquired here and there, and approached Ivarson.

"You are the American gentleman who ordered a helicopter and pilot?" he asked.

"Yes," said Ivarson, giving his name. The other nodded; he was a very blond man with red cheeks and frosty eyes.

"The machine is waiting at Vadheim," he said. "I am Jacob Moller, president of the Airtourist Company. Our business consists in taking tourists by plane and helicopter all over the country. It is growing very rapidly, but I have decided to take a vacation and pilot you myself. This radiogram from New York may interest you."

Puzzled, Ivarson took the extended message. It was from Steven Luring, and stated that Jacob Moller was the brother of the missing Sergeant Jan Moller. Ivarson looked up.

"You! His brother, you say?"

"Yes. Your company got in touch with me. Naturally, I am vitally interested in the search. Also, my father was shot by the Nazis during the war, and my youngest child died of starvation. It will be a great pleasure to assist you."

Good for Quest—always on the job! It was not Ivarson's first encounter with the far-flung network of coöperation afforded by Quest, Incorporated. He shook hands with Moller and wondered how much the man knew or suspected; those frosty eyes conveyed more than the words hinted.

"Unless you wish to wait," Moller said, "I think we'd better take the mail-boat back to Vadheim, spend the night at the hotel, and be off early in the morning."

"I've no particular direction in which to search," replied Ivarson. "Have you?"

"Yes," said Moller. Just the one word, but it jarred Ivarson's wits awake.

"I'm ready," he said.

Then Moller asked his only question: "What's your purpose? To find my brother?"

"No. To recover certain papers that were lost with him."

The other merely nodded.

As he sat beside Moller in the stern of the mail-boat, chugging up the windy turn of the fiord, Ivarson listened to his companion's words, and the truth burst upon him full force. There was no coincidence in all this. He had walked into a slow-moving but tense drama of human affairs. Two months ago, during the winter, Moller had applied to Quest, Inc., to reopen the search for his lost brother.

"I have made money; I could afford it, but they said to wait. Now the time has come. Jan was my older brother, moody, gloomy, given to strange fancies, but I worshiped him. I could never believe he was dead. He was so vital, so full of glorious life! You see, before the war we had become acquainted with Dr. Stensrud. This was north in Trondheim, where we lived. His daughter was with him, and Jan fell in love with her; but later, during the war, she married a German and went to Hamburg. She died there."

The pattern began to show shape, thought Ivarson.

"Stensrud's a friend of yours, then?"

"No!" ejaculated Moller sharply. "Nothing could be proved against

him, after the war. He's not a bad man. He has done fine things. But for two years I have had him watched, since he began going to Germany. This is the second trip he has made up the Jostedal this spring. Last fall he carried many things, a heavy load. It is not safe up there now. Packs of wolves and wild dogs are in the mountains."

He seemed inclined to stop there, but Ivarson prodded him.

"But you know where to look, you said."

"An old man, who used to be a tourist guide up there, followed Dr. Stensrud last fall. He goes around to Vik, then up the Eldale. All the folk there died during the war. He goes on across the mountains to a little lake



The cave-man halted, staring at them, laughing, apparently friendly enough.

called Trollvand, or Troll's Lake. From there he returns. There, then, is where we must go."

"He left yesterday. He'll be there ahead of us."

"Not likely. Even from Vik it is a long journey afoot. We'll go in two hours."

Ivarson was delighted. The job was as good as done, he thought.

Morning saw them off early. The helicopter lay in a field near the hotel and pier; it was one of the tiny owner-pilot ships with which the market had been flooded when aviation first boomed following the war. A curious throng gathered to watch, a crowd whose faces still bore the look of pinched pallor bequeathed to the Norse people by Hitler. Almost before Ivarson knew it, they were aloft and whirring above the deep Vadheim gorge toward the North Fiord.

Alone together in the air, Moller reverted to the topic deepest in his mind.

"Stensrud and his daughter were visiting in Trondheim when we met

them. Jan was a stout fellow, but he had read too much in the old saga tales; his mind was full of it. He saved the Doctor's life—he was knocked off a ferryboat, and Jan jumped in and held him up. Stensrud did not forget it."

That was all. Now he fell to pointing out scenery like a tourist guide, keeping the helicopter at a thousand feet or less, naming mountains and lakes.

"If you knew last fall where your brother was," said Ivarson, "why didn't you come to look for him?"

"I did; it was useless. I could not find the place, because of the snow. The lake had vanished. The country is all different under snow, which lingers long in the high districts. It is a tiny little lake, hard to find from the air. You'll see."

IVARSON did see, as towns and roads vanished and they mounted above the wild and savage back-country. Although he had a good air-eye, he could make little of the rocky plateau beneath, studded thickly with glacial lakes of all sizes; and if all were under a carpet of snow, the task would have been far more difficult.

"See that crooked peak to the right? That's Greuen," said Moller. "Off the northwest shoulder lies Skrattadal. Skratta is the Old Norse word for wizards or trolls. Skratta valley is a shallow, rocky gorge ending in Trollvand. It's always been shunned as an abode of evil spirits, from ancient days."

"Oh!" said Ivarson. "You're superstitious?"

Moller gave him a frosty glance. "Bosh! Our people are, of course. You should know. You're of our blood."

Ivarson laughed a little; he had no more superstition than a time-clock.

The helicopter dipped and settled, poised in air, then moved on, as Moller watched the ground below. Here were no trees, no earth; all was a bleak mass of jagged naked rock. The plane came down to within a hundred feet of the granite tips, hovered, then went slowly on. Moller's blue eyes glittered excitedly.

"There! There! To the left! Skrattadal!"

Ivarson saw it, a rocky little dale ending in a pinpoint of blue water, all so steeply enclosed by crags as to be nearly lost to sight. The plane followed it, dipping gradually down. A tiny stream of water from the lake trickled along the gorge. The lake itself was no more than fifty yards across, surrounded by a small open space strewn with boulders; all was empty, desolate, untenanted. The helicopter came down to twenty feet, then gently dropped in the center of a group of rocks, on a black spot.

"A place of old fires, here in this sheltered spot—we're directly on it!" declared Moller, throwing open the cockpit door. "But there's no one in sight."

They got out together. It was true about the fire-blackened spot. Outside the group of rocks, fronted by



Dr. Stensrud stepped into sight, looking at Ivarson and the scene beyond. . . . He aimed point-blank.

precipitous crags on one side and lake on the other, was no other indication of human life. So overpowering was the impression of desolation that Ivarson shivered.

"Perhaps we're all wrong," he said. "Perhaps Stensrud does come here, makes camp, enjoys the solitude, and goes back again. Perhaps there's no more to it—"

A peal of roaring laughter burst out close by, as though answering his doubts, and was reechoed from the high rocky walls around. Moller gasped. Incredulity seized Ivarson. Here was a man—a man strange indeed—advancing toward them, where a moment ago had been no one. Moller caught the answer.

"A cave," he said, with a catch of breath. "There are caves here—"

His voice died. The man approaching them was like some prehistoric figure, very tall, with huge matted beard and long hair of deep auburn. He was wearing skins and skin boots, and carried a steel-tipped lance or spear. A cave-man indeed! He halted, staring at them, laughing, apparently friendly enough.

For a moment, Ivarson half believed they had come upon some relic of the Ice Age. His common sense knew better, but he saw Moller shrink back and put a hand before his eyes. This man afraid? No, it was not fear, but something deeper and more deadly. The cave-man was talking rapidly

in what Ivarson took to be gibberish, but Moller lifted his head and replied. Then Ivarson saw his companion's face, and it was the deathly contorted face of a stricken man. He grasped Moller's arm.

"What is it?" he demanded. "What's this fellow saying?"

"That he is Thor, the ancient god," replied Moller. "He is talking Old

Norse. Don't you see? He is my brother Jan. And he is mad!"

He moved forward and held out his hand, and the cave-man gripped it.

SOMETHING lifted the hair on Ivarson. His spine prickled. The ghastly place, the sudden horror of Moller's words, the realization of what this man must be going through, unsteady him; but there was something more. Something intangible, the quivering of some sense he could not name, as the laughing cave-man slipped an arm about the shoulders of the brother he did not know. He showed friendliness but no recognition. Then he slapped Moller on the back and departed at a run toward the lake and beyond it, disappearing among the big boulders there.

Moller wiped sweat from his face, and spoke in a low voice.

"He says—he says that he has gone to tell the trolls that we are friends, so they will not harm us. Oh, he is quite out of his head, quite! It is horrible. And there is a cave, as I

thought. It is behind that up-jutting rock with the pointed top. Now is your chance to go and look for what you want."

A sensible idea, reflected Ivarson. He turned and approached the cliff-face, where stood the enormous boulder in question. Behind the boulder now appeared a hole in the crag, a scant half dozen feet from the ground. Rude steps were hewn in the rock.

He made his way into the opening, which was shoulder-high but heightened inside, and led back some ten feet into a chamber six yards across. Animal odors assailed him as he fumbled for matches. Moller had said aright. The madman would probably refuse to part with anything that might be here, he thought, so this was the time—

THE match flared. Here was a frightful litter of animal skins, bones, filth, dried moss, debris of fires and of a winter's living; but against the far wall showed a little pile of objects that drew Ivarson speedily. Here lay a pistol, U.S. Army issue, a parachute harness and other oddments of clothes, belts, various containers—the remnants of such things as a man might have worn or carried. There was a toilet case, unopened and intact; with it a leather briefcase, green with mold. On this Ivarson seized, and lit another match.

The zipper worked; the case opened; inside were papers. Ivarson snatched them out, folded them across, and slipped them inside his shirt. From the floor he scraped up handfuls of the dried moss, stuffed them into the briefcase, shot the zipper

shut, put the thing back where it had lain, and made hurriedly for the entrance.

He seemed to have been inside a long while; in reality, only a few brief minutes. The madman was not in sight. Moller sat on a boulder stuffing a pipe. Ivarson came back to him and met his look of inquiry with a nod.

"I found what I'm after. I'm finished. I fear you haven't begun."

"I know. I know. One can't tell what to do." Moller held a match above his pipe.

"Count on me, if I can help you in any way. It's not my affair, but we're together in this thing. You've got a tough problem to face."

"Thanks," said Moller. "My affair, not yours. I'll handle it."

Ivarson felt distinctly rebuffed. He was glad of it, glad to be out of the mess. Now he was definitely an on-looker at this strange and darkly sinister tragedy, for he felt it could be nothing else. He walked down to the tiny lake. Instead of being the usual clear blue, by some trick of color refraction it looked murky and darkly ominous.

A strange water, conveying a sense of secret mutters, of dread and mysterious depths, as though they might part at any instant to reveal some fearsome thing. Ivarson tried hard to shake off the feeling; because Moller had mentioned trolls and wizards, the power of suggestion was at work, he told himself. Yet he knew otherwise. This place had been named in ancient times before history, because of this very appearance.



So Sergeant Moller, in making his parachute landing, must have been injured! No doubt bashed his head coming down among these boulders; perhaps had lain in helpless agony a long while, surviving by sheer strength of his vitality, to end up a madman throttled by insane fancies! By what miracle had Dr. Stensrud happened on him—Stensrud, whose daughter had died married to a Nazi? Things began to have an even more ugly look.

Ivarson strolled back to where Moller sat. "Does this place have a queer look to you?" he asked.

Moller nodded. "Very. One of the old kings killed a number of trolls here when the land was becoming Christian; hence the name. They have walked ever since, the peasants say. I'll go and get the food from the plane; luckily I brought plenty along, in case of accident."

He departed toward the helicopter, which was among the rocks at a distance, and disappeared there. Almost instantly Ivarson was vividly aware of a frantic depression, almost a terror, at finding himself thus left alone. He started to follow Moller, then halted; the gigantic figure of the cave-man was coming from beyond the lake. Ivarson forced himself to go and meet the man.

As before, the wild creature was affable. He came up to Ivarson in obvious good humor and extended his hand. The American took it, held it, and spoke quietly in English.

"Well, Sergeant? Ready to report for duty?"

A puzzled look came into the bearded face, whose lines Ivarson now recognized as those of the photograph.

"*De maa vente lidt*," he said slowly in Norwegian. "You must wait a bit. He is coming now."

"Speak English," said Ivarson. The other frowned blankly, then turned and pointed. A figure was coming into sight, not from down the gorge, but from the lake. In astonishment Ivarson recognized Dr. Stensrud approaching, stooping a little beneath his rucksack.

"Moller!" he called sharply.

Moller appeared and came walking briskly, basket in hand. With a start, Ivarson realized that noon was close. The three stood in silence, until suddenly the cave-man bawled out something. Stensrud waved a hand in response and displayed no surprise.

"*God dag*," he said composedly. "So you reached here ahead of me. Jacob, I am glad to see you. Good day, my American friend."

HE slipped the straps of his burden and let it drop to the ground, not offering to shake hands, but straightening his shoulder-muscles with relief. It was a curious meeting; Moller stood with frosty gaze concentrated on Stensrud, who seemed unconscious of anything out of the ordinary.

"How convenient, these machines!" he observed cheerfully. "It would have caused too much talk had I used one to come here, so I came afoot, and envied you as I saw you in the air above." He regarded Ivarson inquiringly. "And did you too come here to find poor Jan?"

"No," said Ivarson. "I came to keep Herr Jacob company. I'm out of the picture."

"Perhaps," said Stensrud, with a slight smile. "Perhaps."

Moller made a sound in his throat like a growl. "I am not waiting for you to make jokes, Stensrud," he said.

"I appreciate that fully," replied the other. "Shall we talk as we eat? This keen air makes one hungry. I have food here, if you would care to share it."

"Thanks. We have our own," said Moller. Then, with an effort, he regained his old composure. "You have much to say. Eat, if you like."

"There are some good flat rocks by the water," Stensrud said, and spoke to the cave-man, who grinned, picked up the rucksack and started for the lakeside. "He is such a child," said Stensrud. "Such a pleasant, happy carefree child!"

MOLLER, who had turned quite pale, said nothing. He was laboring under hard restraint.

They went on down to the water-side, sat on stones, and laid out provender of all sorts in growing tension; the silence was broken only by Stensrud and the cave-man, who barked at each other in Old Norse—if that were the tongue. Ivarson could make nothing of it.

And yet, at least to him, things were coming clear, to a certain extent. Stensrud knew of some shortcut to this spot, had seen the hovering helicopter, and had put two and two together without trouble. Those composed but incisive features, energetic and forceful beneath the clipped Vandyke, remained enigmatic to Ivarson, and perhaps to the deeply stirred Moller as well. None the less, tension hung in the air, like powder awaiting a spark.

Stensrud brought water from the lake, took one of his own sandwiches, and gave the cave-man a huge meaty bone on which the man gnawed like an animal.

"No doubt you wonder," he said calmly to Moller, "why I never reported to you that I had discovered Jan?"

"Naturally," said Moller in a thick voice. "All this time, these two years!"

"No, less than that," Stensrud declared. "Well, I found him, by accident. He brought me here; we were friends. He does not know me or anyone, of course. He had existed here like a god, in utter solitude, living God knows how! I wrote you a letter, then slept on it and burned it, Jacob. I had a duty to this man. He is mad, but not a menace; he is happy here. Should I be the cause of his being hunted down and dragged to an

asylum? There are too many mad-men in Norway today."

"Thanks to the damned Nazis," growled Moller.

The Doctor, finishing his sandwich, nodded assent.

"Yes. Jan needs no one to look after him. In an asylum, he would die miserably, ruled and regimented. Here he is free. Besides, I discovered secrets that he had brought here with him; papers of value. I took such as interested me when I went to Hamburg, where Elsa lies buried, to erect a monument over her grave."

"Were they yours to take?" interjected Ivarson. Stensrud turned and regarded him attentively, speculatively, and Ivarson instantly regretted his words.

"They were his, at least," came the reply. "I have put those papers to work, and Jan will one day be a rich man in consequence. I have kept careful accounts; his share of the money is in the bank at Bergen, in his name."

This was astonishing news; it staggered Ivarson, and Moller did not know what to make of it. The Doctor took another sandwich and bit at it carefully.

"I have a tooth needing attention," he said, with a grimace. "Well, Jacob, now you must choose. If you want to take Jan away, it is your right. You can have him locked up and you will be made guardian of his money. You should do well by it."

Moller flushed, and his hand clenched. The thrust was shrewd and went deep. But those words opened Ivarson's eyes; now, for the first time, he realized what this calm manner of Stensrud's signified. The man was playing Moller like a fish on his line and beneath this deceptive calm lay a burning hatred on the one side, and perhaps deep fear on the other.

"Ah, you hell-hound!" said Moller, breathing hard. "How did you get here?"

"Over the *Fjeld*," Stensrud jerked a thumb at the mountains. He gave Moller a quick, wary glance like a swordflash.

Ivarson saw that he was forgotten. The two men were entirely absorbed in each other. Jan Moller sat on his hunkers, gnawing away on his polished white bone like a dog who imagines there is still meat where none remains. Moller stuffed his pipe and lit it. This calmed him. He became almost as composed as Dr. Stensrud.

"I see," he observed. "You are more clever than people think. About leaving Jan here, you may be right, unless he could recover his sanity."

"That," said Stensrud with finality, "is impossible."

"Is it?" put in Ivarson. "An injury in landing must have caused it; there-

fore an operation may remove the pressure on the brain."

Moller's eyes flashed with sudden eagerness. Stensrud turned and again surveyed Ivarson, a slight smile on his lips.

"My friend from America, what is your interest in all this affair?" he asked quietly. Too quietly—under the words lifted a vibration, a high frequency wave, of danger. Ivarson flung aside the quick mental warning; it angered him.

"Let's quit this sparring, Doctor," he said. "You're clever, as Moller says; too clever not to know the game is up. Clever people like you overreach themselves, in the long run. We're taking Jan with us, and you can't stop it, much as you'd like to." "I have no such intention," said Stensrud pleasantly.

"No!" broke out Moller. "You'd leave him here to rot out his life, in—sane! For years you've twisted circumstances to serve yourself, Herr Doktor. You sit back and laugh at other men as clumsy fools, and let them suffer. Now things have caught up with you."

"In this lonely place?" Stensrud glanced around, as though amused. "Come, Jacob, don't let your animosity warp your common sense! Really, I've no intention of obstructing or even opposing you. In fact, I shall do nothing at all. It would be silly of me, and I have not the right."

Moller looked at him hard. "You are too smart for me; but look out!" he said. "You have studied the old stories, the old history and language, of our land. You know that King Haakon the Good was killed by a shoe-boy, St. Olaf by a farmer, Haakon Jarl the Mighty by a slave. These were the greatest and cleverest men in Norway, Herr Doktor, yet each came to his end by the hand of a fool."

Stensrud broke into a laugh and rose.

"So you threaten me, Jacob? Well, well, in that case I'd better get away from here and leave you to your own devices, since you're determined to regard me as an enemy. I'll say good-bye to Jan and go my ways. Drop me a line at Torsen and I'll send you the statement of Jan's account."

HE turned away. The cave-man dropped his bone and sprang to meet him; together they walked off in the direction of the cave. Moller swung wide eyes upon Ivarson.

"What is he up to? He tricks one's senses—and yet you felt it, too—the evil in him! I don't know how to act with a man like that. What do you think?"

"I think he's a damned dangerous rascal," Ivarson replied. "Though, to be honest, I've small basis for the be-

lief. I tried to keep out of this business, but he was just plain lying about your brother."

"That is what I felt."

"There's an old Army pistol in that cave," said Ivarson. "But it's so rusty and foul that I'd hate to use it."

"What do we need of a pistol?" Moller said scornfully. "Two men against one—and he has no weapon. Well, we can crowd Jan into the plane with us, if he'll come. I'll have to talk with him."

"He's coming now," said Ivarson.

Moller glanced around. An exclamation broke from him. His face changed, and he sprang to his feet. Ivarson, with one look at the nearing figure, started up.

DR. STENSRUD had disappeared among the boulders or into the cave. Jan Moller was approaching the other two men at a swift shambling walk, but his good humor had vanished. His eyes were fastened on his brother; an expression of terrifying menace filled his bearded face. He clutched his spear as though intending to use it.

Moller spoke sharply in Old Norse. The madman burst into furious speech; he was coming directly for Moller with evident intent to spear him.

There was no time to talk, to think. Across Ivarson's brain flashed the infernal meaning of it—Stensrud had put the madman up to this, and was using him as a weapon with callous purpose. Then Jan, leaping upon his brother, drove in savagely with the spear. From Moller broke a loud cry of comprehension. He avoided the thrust but his face was stamped with fear and horror that seemed to hold him helpless. Not so Ivarson, who was already in motion. He came darting in from one side, seized the spear as Jan lifted it again, and tore it from the grasp of the surprised madman.

The latter, with one roar of rage, jumped at Moller and knocked him senseless with a blow of his huge fist. He swung around, slaving bestial sounds, and flung himself at Ivarson, who made at him frantically with the spear. He caught hold, regardless that it dug into his ribs, and wrenched it away as though Ivarson had been a child. A bellow of pain and fury escaped him. He broke the stout hardwood haft of the spear across a boulder like a twig and rushed at Ivarson, foam on his lips and beard.

Fright, the queer horrified fright one instinctively feels of any aberrate person, whether drunk or lunatic, seized Ivarson; but he kept his head. Once in the grip of this gigantic fury he would be lost; cope with such frenetic strength he could not. He

had only one possible recourse—skill against insensate brawn.

Almost instinctively he sidestepped the rush, evaded the grasping hands and planted his fist full weight behind the ear. It was a hard, driving blow. Jan was knocked off balance and went staggering, only to shake his head and come back in new rage. Ivarson danced lightly aside. He had excellent footwork and needed it. Time after time he evaded the frantic rushes, time after time he got in blows that would have finished an ordinary man, but they had not the least effect except further to madden his opponent.

Thank heaven for the old wartime Commando training! He got home rabbit punches, paralyzing blows to the upper-arm muscles, brutal smashes to the belt and throat. In short, he did his very utmost, and barely managed to keep himself clear of those grappling arms. His knuckles were bleeding and a desperate fright was growing upon him, for he was puffing and out of condition, yet this battered, glaring-eyed maniac kept rushing at him with undimmed ferocity.

And then—a stone turned under his foot and he went to one knee.

He was lost, and knew it. Jan Moller was upon him with a snarling growl, and they went rolling together. No evasion now! He felt those broken-nailed hands clawing at him, sinking into his throat. He fought in a frenzy that was unavailing. The iron grip fastened home. The madman had him pinned down; his breath was cut off, the slaving face was almost against his own.

His clutching fingers closed upon a bit of jagged stone.

Lungs afire, he hammered at the head of matted hair, blindly and frantically; this time he got results. The deathly grip relaxed. Another smash, and the fingers fell away, the huge shape went limp. Ivarson squirmed clear, gasping the air into his lungs. Shaken and trembling, he gained his feet, then dropped the stone and looked down at the sprawled senseless figure.

Dead? No. He stooped, found the pulse thudding strongly, and straightened. A voice reached him; it was Moller, reviving, trying to rise. Ivarson staggered over to him and helped him erect.

"Your brother—tie him—find something—"

With the broken words, Ivarson turned and stumbled away. Urgency drove him, and wild anger. That

devil Stensrud was in the cave; no escape for him now! Let him answer for this diabolic thing—break down his smooth, crafty self-control! Corner him and smash him into crude passion—

Ivarson was almost at the big boulder in front of the cave, when from behind it Dr. Stensrud stepped full into sight, looking at him and at the scene beyond. Full comprehension was in his features as Ivarson halted and started to speak.

Without a word, Stensrud lifted his arm; in his hand was the big service pistol that had been lying in the cavern. A slight smile touched his lips. He aimed point-blank, as a hasty oath escaped Ivarson. Then the pistol exploded in a deafening roar of sound that reverberated from the craggy walls in lessening echoes. A few stray bits of metal from the burst weapon clattered on the rocks.

Ivarson stood checked and frustrate, bewildered, untouched. His brain cleared. He was still standing there when he heard a curt, bitter laugh and Moller came up beside him, gazing at the man who lay face down with a crimson tide welling out on the stones from beneath him. Moller stepped forward and knelt, and rose again.

"Finished," he said. Again that curt laugh escaped him. "So let him lie here, a good place for him. Skrat-tadal—Troll's Lake. . . . There he is, the last of the trolls, the evil spirits! Now he will walk with them of nights, screeching down the dale, sinking into the black waters where they live—"

Ivarson turned away with a shiver.

TOGETHER they carried the bound and senseless figure of Jan Moller to the plane and lifted him in, and tied up his bleeding head. The helicopter blades whirled, the engine thrummed, the ground dropped away and they rose into the sunlight. A spasmodic movement shook the bound figure and sounds escaped him. Ivarson leaned over, wiping the blood from the bearded face with a wet cloth, then looked suddenly up at Moller in wild surmise.

Conjecture rushed upon him, sharp comprehension struck him. Those battering blows of stone on skull—was it possible? The cave-man's eyes opened, eyes no longer furiously vacant, but now sane and normal.

"Jan Moller," came a husky voice. "Sergeant Moller—reporting for duty, sir—"

The eyes closed. A sigh came from the bearded lips. Sergeant Moller relaxed again in unconsciousness, but now he was smiling as he slept.

All was well with the world again; the file of the unfinished search was closed.

In our next issue, "The Affair of Beryllium Q," takes you to post-war Siberia and one of the most dramatic stories of "Quest, Inc."

The Treasure Chest

ANCHORED there with the ship rolling gently, I could look out and see the lights of Suva alternately rise and dip from sight. It was hot, that night, with the trades a month overdue. From open hatches came the rancid smell of copra.

"It's not for sale," Captain Horn said. He spoke quietly, as always; for Horn was none of your roaring shipmasters. He came from New Bedford, and the sea was in his blood, yet I'd never heard him swear at even a deck-swabber.

"You'd better put a few braces on it, then," I retorted, "before it falls to pieces." We were in his stuffy little cabin, where for the past hour I'd been trying to wheedle him out of an old brass-bound sea-chest by the wall there. The chest's metal was tarnished, and its oak was rotting—indeed, many of its rivets had corroded completely away.

Horn nodded. "Aye, I reckon it won't stand much handling. That's why I've never touched it since I fetched it aboard just a year ago."

A Malay boy came in with tall lime drinks—liquorless, for Horn again broke precedents by being a total

abstainer. There was more ice in his glass, I noticed, than in mine. Nor had the drinks been ordered. It was simply that the cabin boy fairly worshiped his captain. The rest of the crew were the same way. And no wonder. Where else could they find the same fare in the fo'castle as in the master's mess, or stand watch under discipline that didn't sting?

Big and weathered, Horn was, but gentle: a strong man with mild and sky-blue eyes. In the stickiness of this smothering tropic night he was bare from the belt up, wearing only white pants and sandals. And yet even so he carried a dignity at which I, his roving passenger for the past three months, had often wondered. Maybe the answer came from clean Yankee lineage which went back, I knew, all the way to Bunker Hill. Or from books which lined his cabin walls. Thackeray, Dickens, Walter Scott, Stevenson—the very best of prose was there.

"It looks," I said now, meaning the brass-bound chest, "as if it might have been underground a long time."

He smiled faintly. "For fifty-seven years," he said, "it was buried on Snark Island, in the Solomons."

"Then you," I laughed, "couldn't have been the bold pirate who buried it there." For Horn appeared to be not more than forty years old.

To my surprise he flushed, and the flush whitened a long, diagonal knife-scar from his left ear to chin.

"You've been in tight corners, though," I probed, my eye on that scar. "Not that I want to pry into any secrets, Captain."

"It's no secret," he answered me. "You could find most of it in public records, now. Almost anyone down here could tell you about the treasure Bully Cutler buried on Snark Island."

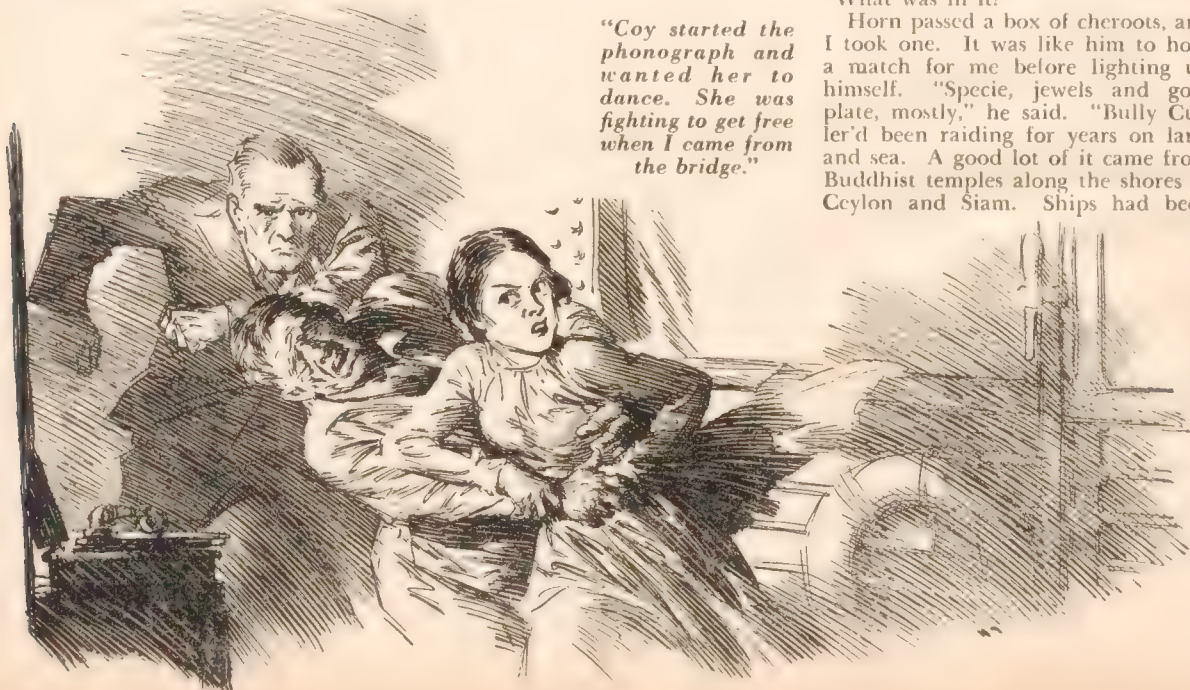
"I hate browsing through records, Captain," I replied.

IT wasn't the first time I'd tried pumping him about that chest. He drained his glass; and then: "All right, Sullivan. If you must have it, it was like this: Gunboats were hot after Bully Cutler, that day fifty-eight years ago when he ducked into Ono Cove in the Solomons. If he was caught up with, he was bound they wouldn't find the chest aboard him. So he went ashore there to bury it in the bush."

"This same chest?" I inquired. "What was in it?"

Horn passed a box of cheroots, and I took one. It was like him to hold a match for me before lighting up himself. "Specie, jewels and gold plate, mostly," he said. "Bully Cutler'd been raiding for years on land and sea. A good lot of it came from Buddhist temples along the shores of Ceylon and Siam. Ships had been

"Coy started the phonograph and wanted her to dance. She was fighting to get free when I came from the bridge."



by ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

scuttled. Certain Moro palaces down Sulu way hadn't been overlooked, either. Anyway, it was all there, in a chest so heavy it took two stout hands to heave away on it."

"Did the whole crew go ashore," I asked, "when they buried it?"

"All but a Chinese cook and a few roustabouts," Horn told me. "These saw the shore party disappear into the bush with the chest. From facts that came out later, we know Bully buried the chest and started back to the beach. But he never got there."

"No?"

"Cannibals," he explained. "They closed in with spears. Massacred every man jack of them."

"The devil!" And yet it was quite credible. Fifty-eight years ago, I knew, the Solomon Islands had not yet been tamed by British rule.

"From a deck half a mile offshore," Horn went on, "the Chinese cook and a few roustabouts saw the whole thing. So they upped anchor and ran out to sea. Being short-handed, they made a lubberly cruise of it. First land they sighted was New Caledonia, where the Chinese cook deserted. The rest of them limped into an Australian port a month later, and were arrested there, prompt enough, and charged with piracy on the high seas. In court, one of those roustabouts turned Crown's evidence to save his neck. He told everything he knew about Bully Cutler."

"Even about the treasure on Snark Island?"

"Even about that. But the man who turned Crown's evidence hadn't seen the chest buried. All he knew was that Cutler disappeared into the bush with it. He couldn't even be sure the wild men hadn't made off with it to the hills. So the chest wasn't found. Yet all the while, one man could have gone right to it."

"Who was that?"

"The Chinese cook. He was a smart youngster, that cook, so he'd taken out some insurance against being cheated. What he did was this: being a Chinese sailor, he kept on hand certain herbs and oily seeds for medicinal purposes; from these he produced a handful of seeds of the Javanese bamboo. Here was a species of bamboo, he knew, which doesn't grow in the Solomons.

"So while Bully Cutler was getting ready to go ashore with the chest,

"I started the engine of the motor-boat and made as much noise with it as I could."

the cook used molasses to make these seeds sticky. Spades and digging tools were being brought from the hold. The Chinese cook, pretending to help carry spades to the rail, managed to plaster sticky seeds by the score all over the spade blades.

"The idea was that when these tools were plunged into moist earth, the seeds would rub off. Some of 'em would be lost or wasted. Some would get planted too deep, some too shallow. But a few could be counted on to take root and sprout. So years later, the island's only growth of Javanese bamboo should mark the spot of buried treasure."

MY cheroot went out, as I stared. Only a Chinese, I conceded, would think of such a thing. "But how," I asked, "did this come out?"

"It didn't," Horn said, "for fifty-seven years. Now let's follow this clever young Chinese cook after he deserted in New Caledonia: That's a French colony, you understand. French boats run regularly between there and another French colony, Tahiti. So it wasn't hard for Li Chang to work his way as ship's cook to Papeete. The atmosphere there exactly suited Li Chang—easy-going French officials, and with the retail business largely in control of his own race, the Chinese. Li Chang started a small shop himself. He made his position even more secure by marriage with a native girl."



This last didn't surprise me. I'd been in the islands long enough to know that Chinese colonists have little trouble winning Polynesian wives. The reason, I've been told, is that Chinese husbands are considered exceptionally good providers, and do most of the housework themselves.

"But wasn't Australian law looking for Li Chang?"

"If so," said Horn, "it didn't find him. Maybe it was because one Chinese looks too much like all others. Anyway Li Chang wasn't disturbed at Papeete. A half-caste daughter was born to his wife. She grew up and married a Frenchman. A daughter by this marriage, named Suzanne Andr  s, just a year ago was a passenger on my ship."

"The granddaughter of a Chinese pirate!" I exclaimed. "What did she look like, Captain?"

"An artist's model," Horn said it with such conviction that I knew he'd been considerably impressed.

Nor did it seem unlikely that a mixture of Chinese, Polynesian and French bloods would produce beauty. To the round, soft perfection of Tahitian features the French would add delicacy and intelligence; while to these a Chinese strain might bring alertness, mystery, exotic charm.

"To what port," I prompted, "did she travel on this ship?"

Horn thumbed his cheroot-stub through the open door and over the rail. From the foredeck we could hear

some Fiji deck-hands singing, and a guitar strumming. And I heard paddles in the bay, a part of us. Out-rigger canoes, piled high with nets, were gliding out toward the reefs.

Still not answering me, Horn fixed his gaze on the old brass-bound chest, and again his cheek flushed. "Did you ever meet her grandfather, Li Chang?" I probed.

"No," he said. "But I know that Li Chang was a respected merchant of Papeete for fifty-seven years. He was two thousand miles from the Solomons, but occasionally he learned from some seafaring man what was going on there: about treasure-hunters knocking through the bush for Cutler's chest—and never finding it.

About missionaries and British colonists moving in there, until finally the cannibals of Snark Island were tamed down.

"After twenty years at Papeete, Li Chang took passage on a copra boat to the Solomons. He found trading stores at Ono Cove, on Snark Island, and a Roman Catholic mission. Li Chang was too canny to try settling there: he had no passport which would admit him as a permanent colonist; also, the Britishers might connect him with Cutler's old crew.

"But it was safe enough to go ashore as a tourist, apparently just to stretch his legs. Li Chang did stretch his legs ashore, taking a walk through the bush and looking for Javanese bamboo."

"HE could begin," I suggested, "right where he'd seen Cutler disappear into the trees."

"Aye, he did just that; and in a few hours he found Javanese bamboo. The only growth of it on that island! The sprouts had spread, these last twenty years, until the bamboo patch covered nearly an acre.

"Shannon and company were busy ashore. Before morning they dug up that chest."

"His ship would be there three days, taking cargo; so Li Chang had just that long to work. The first night he got himself a cane-knife, a spade and a lantern. The second night he began cutting into that bamboo."

I said that if the thicket covered an acre, it would take Li Chang months to find the right spot.

"No," Horn parried, "because he could see where the growth was oldest. The first bamboos to sprout were the tallest and had the fattest boles. Li Chang hacked his way to this spot late in his third night on Snark Island. Here he dug, and his spade struck the chest."

"But even then," I wondered, "how could he get away with it?"

"He couldn't, and had sense enough to know it. It would need two strong men to carry that chest to the beach. And if Li Chang exposed the chest, the British Government might confiscate it. Or ruffians on the beach would take it away from him. Not one chance in a million he could smuggle it to his cabin on the ship.

"So Li Chang did the only safe thing. He helped himself to as many gold coins as his loose blouse shirt would hold. Then he closed the chest and spaded dirt back into the hole. Leaving the bulk of the treasure still buried, he sailed home."

"Didn't the Snark Islanders," I questioned, "find the swath that he'd hacked through the bamboo?"

"Maybe, but it wouldn't seem to mean anything. Somebody might have been chopping poles for the

fence of a compound. In that climate it would only take a little while for new shoots to close up the swath. No suspicion on Snark Island. Folks at Papeete, though, were a little curious when Li Chang got home and began spending gold coin to enlarge his shop."

"That was thirty-seven years ago?"

"Aye, and Li Chang waited another fifteen before making his second trip to the Solomons. . . . In all, he went there three times. Each time he came back with pocketfuls of gold. The third and last trip was just three years ago. The mate of a tanker went ashore at Papeete and did some talking. It got out that all three of Li Chang's cruises had been to the same cove in the Solomons."

"People got wise, then, I imagine?"

"There were only three smart enough to hit the mark, or close to it. One of 'em was a broken-down pearl-trader named Shannon—an Australian lubber, bald and oily, and as hard as Pharaoh's heart. He'd taken up with a slick little lime-juicer called Hibbs, and a deserter from the U. S. Navy at Pago Pago, one Hutch Coy. These three began looking up records to get a line on Li Chang."

EIGHT bells struck from the bridge. I heard the deck-watch change, and feared Horn would run me off to bed. He kept sober hours, as a rule. When he now went to his bunk and dropped the mosquito tenter, I protested: "It's too blamed hot to sleep, Captain."

"It's too late to sit up yarning, Sullivan," he argued.

"All right, run me out. But if you do, I'll scuttle the ship."

With a grin he sat down and lighted another cheroot. "I mean," he went on, "that Shannon, being an Australian, had a headful o' facts about the trial of certain pirates a long time ago. There'd been mention of a Chinese cook who'd never been picked up. Li Chang, an old man by now, could easily be that cook. This, plus Li Chang's three trips to Snark Island for gold coins, was enough to convince Shannon."

"They tried to bully the secret out of him?"

Horn shook his head. "They knew they'd never crack an old pokerface like Li Chang. So they had to figure some other way. Each of those three swabs tried out a different idea."

"They went to the Solomons?"

"Only Shannon. His idea was to ask natives around Ono Cove about Chang's three trips there. He figured he could pick up something that way, but didn't."

"What about Hibbs and Coy?"

"They stayed in Papeete. Hibbs figured he'd wait till Li Chang made



SUZANNE

a fourth trip, and then tag along. Hutch Coy figured the easiest way to get that treasure would be to marry its heiress."

"Li Chang's half-French granddaughter?"

"Aye. Suzanne Andrés. She was just out of a convent by this time. Her parents were dead, and she was keeping house for her only living relative, Li Chang—running his shop, too, because Li Chang was close to eighty and getting feeble. Hutch Coy spent a year courting her. He was a big bruiser, with a sort of shifty good looks, and at Pago he'd been a heart-breaker among the Samoan girls. But at Tahiti he didn't have any luck with Suzanne."

"Did Suzanne know about the Solomon Islands treasure?"

"Not until a bit more'n a year ago, when Li Chang died. She was at his bedside, and with his last breath Li Chang told her about the buried chest."

"Everything?" I asked.

"He had to tell her everything to convince her it was there. She'd been the faithful comforter of his old age, you understand, and he wanted her to have a rich dowry. So he told her where it lay—under the only thicket of Javanese bamboo on Snark Island."

"But how, without help, could she get it?"

"She didn't want it," Horn said. "Don't forget she'd been schooled in a convent. To Suzanne, a good Catholic, that pirate loot was untouchable. Li Chang's connection with it shocked and shamed her."

"I can understand that, Captain."

"At the same time—she wanted to make amends. As nearly as she could, she wanted to right the crimes of Li Chang." A note of reverence came into Horn's voice. He spoke softly, not facing me, as though he had forgotten his impudently curious audience and was reviewing in reverie something which had cut close to his

own life. Clearly it *had* touched his life; else how could the chest be in his cabin?

"So what," I made bold to prompt, "did this Christian grandchild of a Chinese pirate decide to do about it?"

"She decided," Horn answered, "that all of it must go to church and charity—half toward the establishment of Catholic missions in Polynesia, and half to refugees of her grandfather's race in China. She knew about the war now going on there; that millions are starving in Shanghai and Hong Kong. Charity to the poor of his own country, she thought, would erase the shame from Li Chang's past. And because much of this treasure had been looted from temples, she would divert half of it toward South Sea missions."

"But the British might confiscate this pirate loot," I suggested, "if she brought it to light."

"Suzanne felt sure they'd do just that," Horn admitted, "if she tried taking the chest off Snark Island. But if she turned it directly over to a priest there, no questions would be asked. As church property, it wouldn't be subject to tax or confiscation. So she went to her own priest at Papeete and asked him for a letter of introduction to the priest at Ono Cove."

"Father Michael has the church there, my daughter," the priest said. "I know him well—a grand man."

"And Suzanne said: 'I've an estate on Snark Island that I do not want or need. I'd like to turn it over to the priest there.'"

"The Tahiti priest blessed Suzanne. He gave her a letter of introduction which stated simply that Suzanne owned property in Father Michael's parish which she wanted to sign over to the church."

"And then," said Horn, "she booked passage on this very ship. I was at anchor at Papeete and due to deliver a cargo of roofing iron in the Solomons. My port was Kieta, to the leeward of Snark Island. But because mine was the first boat going that way, Suzanne came to ask about passage."

THE glow in his eyes made me smile. "You seem to remember the incident quite well, Captain."

"Only a blind man wouldn't. You should have seen her that morning, Sullivan. In a long white cape, and a hood with her small pink face peeping out at me, I thought at first she was a French nun. Then she spoke in Tahitian to a boy who brought along her bags, and I knew she was part native. Later, when she took off the hood, something about her eyebrows made me think of the Orient. I didn't dream, though, that she'd just lost a grandfather named Li Chang."

"You agreed to stop at Ono Cove on the way to Kieta?"



"No. I said I'd have to drop off the Kieta cargo first. Then I could shift course a few points and land her at Snark Island."

"Did she tell you her errand?"

"Only that she had business with a priest there. Then, just as I was showing her to the best of my two cabins, two more passengers popped over the side, wanting passage to Ono Cove."

"Hibbs and Coy?"

"None else. And right away I began smelling things. One passenger to an out-of-the-way corner like Ono was queer enough; but *three* of them, all at the same time, kind of bowled me over. It looked as if these lubbers were tagging along after a good-looking girl. But I couldn't prove it. So I booked them. The two-thousand-mile cruise took eight days."

"Trouble?"

"Two licks of it. Only, I didn't know about one of 'em till later. The other time was when Hutch Coy got fresh. He was polite to Suzanne, generally; he called her 'Ma'm'selle.' Sat next to her at the table. Held the chair for her and all that. Kept himself shaved and in whites, with a waxy smile on his face. I could see he was making a dead set and was on the boat only because Suzanne was. And she

"Cannibals," Horn explained. "They closed in with spears. Massacred every man jack of them."

didn't like it. Still, there was no chance to make him pipe down until one night he got liquored. He started a phonograph and then wanted her to dance with him on deck. When she wouldn't, he grabbed her anyway. She was fighting to get free when I came aft from the bridge."

HORN didn't explain just what punitive measures he'd expended. But I saw his fist clench and fierceness gleam from his eyes. I smiled.

"Hutch Coy was sick, rest of the way to Kieta," he said.

"Sick with a broken head," I guessed. "What about Hibbs?"

"He kept pretty much to himself. A ratty little swab, Hibbs, in dirty dungarees most of the time, and with the looks of a mangy monkey. I

mean he had a round frowzy face with hair on the edges, always grinning. But he didn't seem to pay any attention to Suzanne. That was what fooled us. One night when the rest of us were at mess, Hibbs got in this other lick of trouble."

"Which was?"

"I'll come to it later. We made Kieta on schedule, and I dropped the hook there to unload cargo. When Coy took his duffel and went ashore, I wasn't much surprised. It looked like he could see he wasn't getting anywhere with Suzanne, so was just taking himself off at the first port. Hibbs, stringing along with him, got off too. I could tell that Suzanne was mightily relieved to be rid of them."

"Had she told you any more of her errand?"



"Not a whisper—although we were pretty chummy by that time. We'd done a lot of reading together, under the aft deck awning." Horn glanced up at the books along his cabin walls. "Usually I read aloud to her. She had Hugo's 'Toilers of the Sea' with her, and she read chapters of it to me in French. One day I brought out Stevenson's 'Treasure Island'—but she said she didn't like that one."

THE reason was clear, now. She hadn't wanted to be reminded of pirates and buried loot.

"But she was a bit of brightness about the ship," Horn went on, "and I hated to see the time come when we'd have to drop her off at Ono Cove. We weren't more'n a hundred miles from Ono, you understand, only we had to stay three days at Kieta to unload that roofing iron.

"At daybreak of the fourth day, we upped anchor for Snark Island. Raised

it about sundown. I didn't have any business there; so I told Suzanne I'd take her ashore in the gig, then come back and head out through the reef for Suva.

"She looked ashore and seemed a bit frightened. A thatched village, a dozen ramshackle shacks and trading shops, a pub or two, and back of this a steep dark bush. It wasn't like her own Papeete, with its parks and bright roofs and gay girls on the quays waiting for sailors to come ashore. This place, she saw now, was just a scraggly little backwash. The natives in sight were not brown, like Tahitians, but black Malays.

"The only thing to reassure Suzanne was a Roman Catholic mission, well down the beach, with a gilt cross on it. 'There,' she said to me, 'is where I'll find Father Michael.'

"'Yes, miss,' I said, 'you'll find at least one good man there.' And Suzanne said: 'My business will not take long, Monsieur Captain. Perhaps by tomorrow it is finished.'

"'And then?' I asked her.

"She said she'd be ready, then, to go home. I thought fast. It rubbed the wrong way to leave her on Snark Island. 'Maybe I can pick up a bit of cargo here, for Suva, miss,' I said. 'Anyway I'll lay over till tomorrow, to see about it. If you're ready to go by then, I can take you to Suva. From there you can catch the French line to Papeete.'

"She was a lot relieved, and thanked me. So we left her bags on the ship, got in the gig and I rowed her ashore. On the beach, I offered to take her to the mission. But she said she'd rather see Father Michael alone. She had a letter in hand. 'It's from the priest at Papeete,' she said.

"So I watched her walk downshore to the mission. When she disappeared in there, I began making the rounds of traders at the other end of the beach. They were a hard lot, most of them. But I found one rather decent chap, manager of the Burns-Philp station there. I asked him about Father Michael. 'Salt of the earth, Father Michael,' the manager said. 'Is he at home now?' I asked. 'He's always at home,' the man said, 'and ready to help all comers.' So I knew Suzanne wouldn't be delayed waiting."

Horn made a self-abusing grimace. "Someone should have kicked me, Sullivan, for not going there with her."

I was puzzled. "But if Father Michael was salt of the earth, and at home, how could she get into any trouble?"

"You'll see soon enough," Horn answered bitterly. "She went into the mission study, and found what seemed to be Father Michael at his devotions. He wore Father Michael's priestly

gown and sacraments, and white stiff collar, had a bald tonsure and a benevolent smile. It was dusk, and the study was in gloom. How could she know that Father Michael lay gagged in the vestry?"

"You mean," I gasped, "that she was facing Hutch Coy?"

"No, she'd have recognized Coy. The impostor was that Australian swab Shannon, who'd been a year here at Ono Cove kicking around for Li Chang's treasure. Now he was throwing in once more with Hibbs and Coy—who were guarding Father Michael in the next room."

"But that precious pair," I protested, "got off at Kieta!"

"Only long enough to hire some native yawl for Snark Island. We were three days unloading at Kieta, so they beat us to Snark. And they knew something, by then. On the way from Papeete, Hibbs had prowled Suzanne's cabin. He'd found and read her letter of introduction to Father Michael. So all they needed was to make Snark Island ahead of us, and frame Shannon to pose as Father Michael."

I SAW it clearly. Ten minutes would be long enough for Suzanne to present her letter and confide everything.

"Shannon blessed her, damn him!" said Horn. "He told her she'd better return, for the night, to her cabin on the ship. No decent place for her to stop ashore, he said. In the morning she could join him again at the mission, where he would have a crew of his most trustworthy laymen assembled. Together they would go to a clump of Javanese bamboo less than a mile off in the bush. They would dig up the chest and bring it to the mission. Once she saw it so delivered and accepted, she could go her way with blessings from the Church."

"She suspected nothing?"

"Why should she? She was young, Sullivan, and inexperienced. She thanked him and went back to the boat. I met her there. She said her business was under way and would be finished quickly in the morning.

"I rowed her back to the ship. It was just a year ago. A hot, sticky night it was, just like this one, with the trades overdue. But in spite of the heat, that evening Suzanne seemed happier than I'd ever seen her. The mate started a phonograph, and she wanted to dance. So we danced on deck, while the big red ball of a moon dropped beyond the palms of Snark Island. And all that while Shannon and company, you can be sure, were busy ashore."

I nodded. "Digging under Javanese bamboo, of course."

"Aye, digging like hellions. Shannon'd been around long enough to know the lay of the land. Javanese

bamboo was the only clue he needed. And so they lost no time. Before morning they dug up that chest."

RAIN began pattering on deck, but I did not hear it. I wasn't even aware that the watch dashed forward and aft to batten hatches. Instead I sat staring at Bully Cutler's chest, even now within reach of my hand, and a grim witness for Horn's story. "You found it empty, of course, after they'd stripped it?"

"They didn't strip it that night," he said. "Understand, they didn't have much time. Father Michael might get free any minute and set the whole island on their heels. So the lubbers only opened the chest long enough to make sure it was no blind haul. Then they closed it and made off through the bush."

"Tracks?" I questioned.

"Only to the first creek, which they waded to tidewater, then knee-deep along tidewater to another creek and up this."

Rain was pounding hard on the cabin roof now—one of those sudden tropic squalls which smother you like a Turkish bath. In the swelter of this cabin I could see sweat gleaming on Horn from neck to belt.

The mate poked his head in. "Hatches are tight, sir," he reported, and passed on.

Horn, raising his voice to outsound the drumming rain, continued: "You see their position, Sullivan. That night they had no chance to steal a sea-going boat and get clear of the island. So they only lugged the chest as far as they could, and then hid it safely. They went back to Shannon's shack. And at nine in the morning, I took Suzanne ashore. She went one way, toward the mission, and I the other, toward the Burns-Philp store."

"Before I got there, I passed a beach shack and saw Hibbs and Coy on the steps of it. I'd left them at Kieta, so it worried me to find them here. They grinned at me like alley cats, and I saw a big bald man, Shannon, come out to join them. He had a bottle of beer, and he drank my health in derision. Then, far down the beach, I heard a cry. It was Suzanne at the mission. She was waving, calling me, and I went there on the run. She took me inside to Father Michael, who was still trussed up and all but smothered."

Two bells struck. We could barely hear them above the pounding of rain. Announcement of the hour startled Horn. "I didn't think it was that late!" he exclaimed. "Am I boring you, Sullivan?"

"You'll have a mutiny," I said, "if you don't tell me the rest."

He relaxed with a smile and again passed the cheroots.

"Well, we released the priest. Suzanne told us everything. It was my first knowledge of her real errand. It made me fighting mad, but no madder than Father Michael. There was Irish in that priest."

"I asked him if he knew where Javanese bamboo grew, and he did. He took us up a path into the bush. We came to a bamboo thicket and saw a swath of fresh cuttings. At the end of it we found a hole which had held the chest. Right away we knew who'd grabbed it."

"You could have Shannon arrested," I put in, "for impersonating a priest."

"Aye, and Father Michael wanted to do just that. He wanted to send over to Kieta for the resident commissioner, and swear out a warrant against Shannon. But by the time we got back to the mission, we cooled off a bit. It boiled down to this: Suzanne had no more legal right to that chest than Shannon. It was treasure trove, and so a case of finders keepers. Possession of it was at least nine points of the law, if not ten. Courts would have a hard time proving it to be Cutler's loot, after fifty-seven years; and if by any chance they did prove it, it might be confiscated by the State."

And Suzanne, I agreed, would lose her objective, which was to turn the fortune into channels of charity. "So what did you do?"

"It was up to Father Michael, now. He went into seclusion to ask divine guidance. When he came back to us he said: 'The treasure you speak of, my children, was spawned here by evil men. Other evil men have now taken it. They will use it to spread still more evil in the world. I myself decline to join any forceful attempt at recovery—and yet I would like to have it become a blessing instead of a curse. And so if you bring the treasure here and lay it on the altar, I shall be glad to disburse it for the building of God's kingdom.'

"He left us with bowed head. A grand man, Father Michael. Suzanne and I went back to the boat. I was still fighting mad, blaming myself for letting Hibbs prowl a cabin on my ship. 'Leave it to me, miss,' I said. 'I'll get it back from those swabs if I have to stay here a week.'

"'But you can't delay here that long,' she protested.

"I told her I could, if I stretched a point. As you know, Sullivan, I own a third interest in this little freighter, and the other owners give me a pretty free hand. 'But what,' she worried, 'could you do in a week, or a month, or even a year?'

"I didn't know. But I sent her out to the ship and then went to have a showdown with the Shannon crowd. I saw all three of 'em on the stoop of Shannon's shack, and Hibbs sang out:

'Yer aint lost anything, 'ave yer, mytey?' Then I knew it was no good starting a row right there. They'd be too smart to keep that chest in the shack. So I passed by and went on to the Burns-Philp store."

"To confide," I asked, "in your friend the manager?"

Horn shook his head. "No, I just asked him to get me a couple of honest natives. I specified big strong fellows, and they must be converts of Father Michael's flock. The manager furnished me with two young chiefs of a religious turn, and I soon found out they thought the sun rose and set in Father Michael."

"I put one of them to keeping an eye on the Shannon bunch, and the other one to watching all power-boats along the beach. I thought Shannon'd be making a break for the open sea with that treasure."

"And did he?"

"He did not. The only move they made was to the pub each day, where they soaked up plenty of beer. I borrowed the Burns-Philp motor-boat and moored it, without a padlock, at a pier close to the Shannon shack. Thought I could tempt 'em to steal that boat. We were watching like weasels all the time. But they didn't make any play for it. The week passed, and nothing happened. Every day I went out to the ship and saw Suzanne. She gave up all hope. And so did I. I couldn't keep anchor there forever—it wasn't fair to my owners."

"It looked," I agreed, "like a stale-mate."

"It did," Horn assented, "until I noticed that Shannon and his two mates always kept in a close bunch. When they went to the pub, it was together, and they always came back together. No two of them ever let the third out of sight. It meant that while we were watching them, they in turn were watching each other."

"Gyppers like that wouldn't be likely to trust one another," I agreed.

HORN chuckled. "Once I figured that far, it was easy. That night I took my two big blacks and hid out back of the shack. We saw our three men come home about midnight from the pub, all bleary, and I gave 'em two hours to get fast asleep. Then I slipped in and got my fingers on Hibbs' windpipe. He had no chance to make even a peep, and I got him out of there without disturbing the others. I picked Hibbs because he was a lightweight and easy carried. We simply kidnaped that little lime-juicer and hid him in a warehouse down the beach."

"Then I started the engine of the Burns-Philp motorboat and made as much noise with it as I could. I ran it past Shannon's shack, killed the

motor, cranked it again, then went banging out to sea and around to another cove.

"The racket woke up Shannon and Coy. They saw that Hibbs was gone. A power-boat had just put to sea. It looked like a run-out. And in the morning I got my friend the Burns-Philp manager to do me a favor. I asked him to go up and down the beach raising hell about somebody stealing his boat last night. To Shannon and Coy, it looked plain as day that Hibbs had skipped with the chest. So they went to find out."

"You followed them, I take it."

"With one of my blacks," Horn grinned. "The other was guarding Hibbs at the warehouse. Shannon and Coy led us straight to a pool, two miles up the bush, where they'd sunk the chest in ten feet of water. . . .

"Well, that's all, Sullivan. Except for a broken head or two—and this." Horn touched the knife scar on his cheek. "I got it from Shannon," he said, "just before I laid him out cold. My black man had a *barong*, and for a minute, in the thick of it, he forgot his religion. He was the son of cannibals, you understand. When he tied into Coy with that *barong*, it looked as if he was out after trophies. I managed to call him off, just in the nick of time."

THE pounding of rain stopped, as suddenly as it had begun. I mopped my face with a towel as Horn went on: "We fished the chest from the pool and took it down to the mission. Suzanne was waiting there. She helped us put it on the altar. Then we called in Father Michael. His eyes were saucers when he saw the chest there. But he only asked one question. 'Is it your free gift of love, my daughter?'

"'It is, Father,' Suzanne said. She crossed her heart. 'Half for home missions, half for relief of starving Chinese.'

"Then," Horn said, "she turned to me, thanked me with tears in her eyes and wanted to know how she could repay me. 'All I want,' I said, 'is the empty chest.'

"She asked why I wanted it, and I fished for a reason. The best I could think of was: 'Well, miss, so that when I'm an old man and tell this to my grandchildren, they'll know I'm not yarning.'

"Really, I had a better reason, as you'll see in a moment. Suzanne and Father Michael were glad to let me have the empty chest. So we emptied it, put the gold and jewels in copra bags and stored 'em in the mission vaults.

"An hour later Shannon and Coy came limping out of the bush. At the same time we let Hibbs loose from

the warehouse. All three of 'em saw Suzanne and me parade to a beached boat with four big blacks. The four blacks had that chest, and they carried it as if it was heavy. Every few steps they set it down to rest. Shannon's crowd saw all that. They saw it put into a boat and go out to the ship with Suzanne and me. We sailed on the sunset tide, with blessings from Father Michael."

"A neat take-off, Captain," I applauded. "With the Shannon crowd dead sure the treasure went away on the ship, they were less likely to raid the mission vaults. You and Suzanne, I suppose, sailed to Suva?"

"Aye," Horn said, "and dropped anchor right where we are now, just a year ago." His face clouded. "A French liner was in harbor. Suzanne said good-by to me and boarded it for Papeete."

"You've seen her since, though."

To my surprise he said: "No, I never saw her again."

"Or heard from her?"

"Nor heard from her. But I've heard often from Father Michael." His face brightened a trifle. "He's kept me posted about his disbursements of the treasure. He got half of it into the hands of relief agencies in China, all right. And with the other half he built a fine church on Snark Island. I had a card from him just the other day, with a picture of it. He calls it the Cathedral of Ste. Suzanne." Horn began raking through a desk drawer, looking for the card.

"Know what he did, Sullivan? He built that church on the exact spot where the chest was buried for fifty-seven years. Cleared off that Javanese bamboo, and put it right there. He'd fill it with Solomon Islanders, he said, every one of them descended from the cannibals that butchered Bully Cutler."

Horn found the card and passed it to me. It was an ordinary picture postcard in colors, showing a handsome mission church with a high spire, its cross framed against a background of tropic bush. Beneath this, in his fine stanch hand Father Michael had written a verse from Isaiah. I read:

Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

"A blessing instead of a curse," Horn murmured. He looked off toward the Suva wharves, where only a few lights were burning now.

"But I can't understand why you haven't heard from Suzanne."

"Can't you?" He turned on me almost fiercely.

And then I knew—or thought I did. He was in love with Suzanne Andrés. And yet he couldn't quite forget she was the granddaughter of a Chinese pirate.

I nodded slowly. And my face perhaps was too expressive. Or maybe Horn was psychic that night. For he read accurately what was in my mind.

And it angered him. He stood up, towered over me, and the scar from Coy's knife flashed white on his crimson cheek.

"No, you fool!" he blazed at me. "Do you think I'd care about *that*?"

Something was bursting inside of him. For all this past year he'd kept it locked there—and now it came with a rush: "I didn't let her go, Sullivan. She turned me down. I don't know why I'm telling you. Except I can't let you think I'm a cheap snob. A year ago on this deck, just before she transferred to the French liner, I asked her to marry me. She said no."

He sat down, his face hard and hurt. And there didn't seem to be anything I could say. Father Michael's card was still in my hand. To shift the subject, I referred to it again. "You might lose this, old chap, if you keep it in the litter of that desk. Why don't you keep it in the treasure chest, where it belongs?"

Without waiting for permission, I opened the chest to drop the card in.

Then I saw that the chest wasn't quite empty. Horn, I knew, thought it was empty. I remembered his saying he hadn't touched it since bringing it aboard at Snark Island.

NOW, at the bottom of the chest, I saw a dainty pink note. It was addressed to Captain Horn in French.

Had she put it here just before leaving this deck, a year ago?

I fished it out and passed it to Horn. "If you weren't so dumb," I said, "you'd've known right where to look—for treasure."

His eyes stared. Then he snatched the note and read eagerly. . . . In an instant he had forgotten I was there.

The next thing I knew he was charging on deck and bawling for the mate. I heard him routing all hands and shouting for steam.

By dawn we'd weighed anchor and were slipping out to sea. I knew whither, without asking. Still, I kept coaxing until I got my hands on that note again, and translated:

Monsieur the captain:

You have told me you wish to show the chest to your grandchildren, when you tell them this story.

Do you want them to be part of it?

Please think of this for the long time, my captain; and if in the end it makes no difference, then come to me at Papeete.



The HUNTED

SHE looked at the woman's section in the paper, and at the ads; but when she came to the first pages, to headlines concerned with the Pacific and Russia, to a side-column spread about the Nazi flyers who had escaped ten days ago from a camp in Ontario, and had been seen last night, and almost captured, in a town just south of the Canadian border, she put the pages aside listlessly. It was eight o'clock now, Friday night, three hours or so before Dan would get off the train; outside, wind moved high in the pines, a cool, drowsy sound that stirred the quietness and somehow deepened it; but in the room there was only the small crackle of the fire, and a contented snuffle now and again from amiable old Spot, who was stretched out comfortably on the rug at her feet.

For a while she busied herself with the fire, her brown eyes sober, obscurely shadowed; later, when Spot sneezed again, she reached over and rubbed a hand down behind his ears.

At a quarter past eight, going up to Teddy, who was three years old and a very funny little boy, she tucked the blankets around him and kissed his cheek; and after that, downstairs again, wanting something to do, she opened the porch door and went out through it to the yard.

Of course Ted had forgotten his wagon and his bicycle. Emmy wheeled them down to the shed at the end of the yard, put them inside and closed the door. An October chill, quiet and sharp, flowed up around her like thin water; before her the lake glittered dimly under a sky dotted with young stars, and off the small dock, twenty or thirty yards out, she could see the outlines of Dan's plane, no clearer than a slim shadow riding black water.

Emmy shivered, looking about; across the lake, like a candle-tip frozen to miraculous steadiness, light shone in the window of the Thornes' living-room. It was the only light she could see, in October, when the summer people had gone from this side of the lake,

when only she and Teddy were left, and the Thornes across there. By Sunday, thought Emmy, they would be gone too. Now there would be no more week-ends off for Dan; he had told her that in the letter. With the new pursuit job coming up, they'd be rushed as blazes. And the apartment at home was all ready for her; he'd had Beulah in to clean. So he'd be up Friday night, on the eleven-ten, to help her pack; he'd get a lift from old Mr. Abbott as far as the lake road, and walk up from there. In October, Dan thought, with an early Adirondack snow due any time, it was time they came down to the city.

She knew that was true, looking out for a moment over the great dark sweep of the lake, up at the mountains that rolled blackly, range on range, away from her. Yet she did not want to leave; it was queer, Emmy thought, that here she had never been lonely or afraid. There was something she needed here—she knew that; something serene and peaceful, something—safe.



*A drama of the 1943 Adirondacks
by Thomas Walsh*

Safe. It seemed an odd word, but Emmy did not try to explain it. She went back to the cabin and closed the door, and talked for a while, with determined cheerfulness, to Spot. She had been married for four years, a tall girl with dark brown hair, with clear and quiet brown eyes. In 1935, in Berlin, she had been Emmy Braun. She did not think of that often now; when she did, it seemed remote—another name, another life. But it was there inside her, dim, oddly painful, when she remembered her father.

She thought of him often now, though he had been dead six years. A tall man, Professor Braun, very thin, with a shaggy mop of gray hair, and piercingly shrewd gray eyes. She could remember him when she had been a little girl, and he so high over her that he must bend down to take her hand. Sometimes too, most vividly of all, and more often this last year, she remembered him on a day that was not long before Christmas, a day in Berlin, in 1935, when he got home late for sup-

per, with a sick numbness in his eyes, and a great livid bruise on the side of his cheek.

It seemed there was a boy, a student, whom the men in brown shirts had beaten savagely. And he had come on them, and tried to stop them. They did not hurt him much; they only knocked him down. But the student—he had been lying there when they went away. Then there was not much that Professor Braun or anybody could do for him.

"I think," he had told her, very quietly, "I think we must leave here now, Emmy." And so they had left on a soggy March day, and a boy named Paul Becker had gone to the station with them. Paul was young, dark, entirely unafraid. On soft spring evenings he had walked with Emmy Braun in the Tiergarten, close to her, his eyes shining, his voice not steady at all when he spoke her name. He was not frightened of anyone, Paul Becker. "Crazy men and their crazy leader," he had called the brown-

shirts. "Some day we will show them their place. Some day—"

Spot yawned, and stretched his head out alongside his paws. In the fireplace a log crumbled suddenly, throwing up a brief sputter of tiny sparks. It was ten minutes to nine; when she turned to look at the clock, she saw the paper beside her. "MISSING NAZI AIRMEN STILL AT LARGE! *Bulletin*—" But she did not read the bulletin. There was a little pile of Teddy's things to be darned and buttoned, and she got them and her sewing-kit. And at nine o'clock, with the strokes tinkling in her ears, a faint scuffling sound, made her glance toward the porch door.

It did not frighten her. Spot, she thought—Spot, who gave friendship to everyone, and never made trouble. She called him—and he came obediently, trotting in from some business of his own in the dark kitchen. Then the porch door opened, and in the spread of light that fanned out beyond it, she saw two men. The nearer one was slender, dark, hatless, wearing a

windbreaker and soiled gray pants. After a moment, his head cocked to the side, he came in slowly, smiling at her.

"Emmy," he said. His voice was husky, a little breathless. The smile jumped on his lips. "Do you know an

"So," he said, the huskiness deep in his throat. "So you have not forgotten Paul Becker, Emmy. I knew that, but Willi was not sure. Willi—" He looked beyond her into the shadowed kitchen, his voice unchanged, his eyes sharp and bright. "And Dan," he said, "This Dan of yours. He is not with you here?"

something; then, though speaking to the blond man, he peered up at her once with dark, tired eyes.

"It seems we are important, Willi—there is a bulletin here. From Malone, New York. They seem to know who broke into that store last night; I think Emmy knows too. Now—" He put the paper down, folding it carefully. "Now we must ask her something. We must ask her what she means to do with us."

Willi spun toward her, his pale eyes blazing under narrowed lids.

"What she will do? She is German," he burst out suddenly and harshly. "You told me that."

She scarcely heard him.

"Paul—" she said. The numbness had not yet left her. "Paul, are you—are you—"



Emmy said: "It's only the dog. You must not hurt him."

old friend, Emmy? When I saw the plane out there, I said to myself 'It is all right, I have found her. There is the bungalow, with the lights, and there is Emmy. Even Willi must believe me now.'"

She was turned, facing them: she knew that voice before he came into the room, so close to her that there could be no mistake. Still, she thought first, with the denial of fact a sudden shock always brings with it, no. It wasn't, it couldn't be...

She got up. "Paul—" she said, but as if she did not believe the name. "Paul Becker. Is it—"

He laughed then; he came swiftly around the table and gripped her hands with hard fingers.

The other man, behind him, drifted over toward the kitchen. He moved quickly, but without much sound. It was that other man who told her who they were, dumbly, by the way he looked at her, at the two doorways, and back to her in the same flicker of motion. He had a young, sullen face with blond hair combed back in a lank fold over it; he had blue eyes, very pale blue eyes, and cheeks that were drawn tightly over low, thick cheekbones.

When she looked at the other man there was a dryness in her throat.

"No," she said, through that. "No. Dan is not here."

Paul Becker, reaching over to the couch, to the paper there, murmured

He touched the paper. "The Nazi pilots," he said, drawing out the second word to a long, dry sound. "You know that, Emmy. We did not come here to make trouble for you. I know a girl, I said to Willi—a German girl. We were good friends once. Perhaps—" He rubbed the back of his hand wearily across his forehead. "Perhaps she has not forgotten me. She is married now—she wrote me that. And she told me about the place her husband had, in the mountains in New York. And I remember the name of the lake where it was, and Willi knows how to find it, because he sold cameras here before the war. We come to find out if you are still here. To—"

After a pause, lower, he added: "To ask for this, Emmy: Some food. We were in the woods ten days, you understand; we did not eat often there. Yesterday, in Malone, there was time to take nothing from that store. If we had not heard the police-car coming, they would have trapped us inside it."

He stopped. His face was as gaunt as the blond man's, the eyes feverishly bright, the mouth sunk in at the ends.

"Bread," he said. "And meat. That is why we came to you. Are they poor reasons, Emmy?"

The smile he gave her twisted itself hopelessly across his mouth. When she saw it, an instinctive thing, a naked pity, swept over her with a kind of shame. There were thoughts in her head—confused and inarticulate thoughts: Teddy, Dan, the police.... The shame swept them out of her.

"Sit down," she said, unsteadily. "Sit down, Paul. I will get you food."

HE thanked her, saying she was very kind. But the other one, Willi, said nothing. He stood by the fireplace, where he could watch her move around the kitchen, his hands at his side, his blue eyes wary and alert. Presently, after a time that was not quite real to her, she had food ready—ham and eggs, warmed-over potatoes, bread, an apple pie, coffee. They ate everything she gave them. Only after they had finished, as he drank his third cup of coffee and smoked one of Dan's cigarettes, did Paul notice the red-checked cloth under his plate. He picked up the edge and rolled it between his fingers. At Maxl's they had cloths like that. Did she remember Maxl's?

Maxl's, she said. Maxl's.... She remembered it. They had a garden there with round tables and small yellow lamps, and at the end of the garden, on a little platform, there had been a Bavarian orchestra. Waltz music. Very sweet. Very—

Willi looked at her

"It is not there now," Willi said harshly.

No, Emmy thought; it was not there now. Seven years—a long time. But Paul Becker she would have known anywhere. His black hair came out in a peak still; his eyes seemed as dark, as bright as ever in the thin face. At Maxl's he would tell her of all the wonderful things he was going to do for her. They would be happy together. Paul and Emmy. They would be rich, and famous too. And he had kissed her afterward, while they walked home with their arms about each other—shy kisses, breathless and bitter-sweet. Perhaps he thought of them now, because his eyes moved over her face slowly, with a curious intentness.

"I might have come here," he said, "—to America, Emmy. When I was young, when I had foolish ideas, I said you must go to America, Paul, you must make yourself very rich there. When you meet a girl, you know once, you will tell her—"

His shoulders moved, and lowered again.

"Tell her many things—oh, yes. Then she writes a letter, you understand. There is someone called Dan now—very gay, very charming. Very clever. Did I tell you about the airplanes he designs, Willi? He is a flyer too; he has his own plane. When they

are married, I must come to America and visit them. But I did not come, Willi. Because it was—"

The word eluded him.

Willi, staring down at his plate, spoke quickly.

"You stayed," he said, "where you should have stayed—where there was work for you to do, where there was a Leader."

Paul took the cigarette out of his mouth and stared at it. "The leader.... Do you know something, Willi? For ten days now I have not thought of the Leader. Not once."

Willi's head came up, slowly; his eyes were veiled. And then in the living-room Spot rolled over before the fire. At the sound Willi was up instantly, kicking the chair away from him, reaching the door before Emmy could turn her head. From there, flattened against the wall, he tried to see into the living-room. There was muscle ridged along his jaw. A gun, a small automatic, winked back light from his thigh.

She looked at the gun, and at Willi. She said dully:

"It's only the dog. You must not hurt him. It's Spot."

Paul had got up too, all rigid; but when Spot came in, he sat down and laughed helplessly.

"That one," he said to Emmy, "look at him there! I tell you, there is no one he trusts. No one. Not even your dog."

She said nothing. Inside her, small and cold, a point of hard light had frozen itself solid when she saw the gun. She watched the blond man come back to the table and stand beside it with his head lowered a fraction of an inch, and she thought, calm inside, and still: "He must be gone from here before half-past eleven, before Dan comes. If he is here then, he will wait for Dan with the gun ready; he will speak a warning—flat, harsh. And then if Dan does not stop, if he jumps for him, thinking to protect me and Teddy, he will lift the



WILLI

gun and fire." That was something he had done before. He was not a talkative man. He had no belief in words. In Willi there was another answer and another justification. It was an answer the student had discovered, years ago, in Berlin.

"Paul," she said, holding everything inside her voice, keeping it a little too loud but very steady, "I think you should go now. It is late. And here it is not safe for you."

He glanced beyond her, at the electric clock over the icebox. Ten minutes to ten. Yes, they would leave soon. But first there was an errand Willi must do, a small errand, nothing of importance, he said.

"You can find the village again, Willi?"

The blond man looked at him and nodded. Then he went out, with Spot padding amiably after him. Fifteen minutes to the village, Emmy thought, that deep tranquillity still in her—fifteen more to get back. At half-past ten they would be gone. She must not be silly; she must not think anything else.

"And meanwhile," Paul said cheerfully, "for helping with the dishes, Emmy, here is Lieutenant Becker. At your service."

She smiled at him, wanting to be no different than he remembered her, to be friendly, not nervous at all. But after the dishes were finished, and he was lying on the living-room sofa with his hands locked together at the back of his neck, he seemed to feel some kind of change in her.

"You are very quiet," he said. "Very—strange, Emmy. Is there anything wrong?"

SHE watched the fire. It seemed now that there was a clock ticking inside her head. Twenty past ten. Soon Willi should be back. Soon—"No," she said. "There is nothing wrong."

He turned his head toward her. "Nothing but Paul Becker, perhaps."



PAUL



Willi did not heed her. He jumped down the steps, firing four times.

A thin undercurrent of bitterness sharpened the words. "You are very happy here, Emmy; the war is far away, and you do not have to think of it. But Willi and I come, and we make you think of it. You give us food; it may be that you say to yourself 'It is all right, I can wait. They will be caught when they leave here. Or I can go to the village and tell them what happened. Tell them about the Nazis who made me feed them and—'"

She flushed. "That is not true. You do not believe it, Paul."

Yet she knew something of it was true: the war she would not think of, the madness in which she made no choice because she had had to make no choice. She was German—Willi had said that. So she must help them. It was very simple to Willi.

"No," he said, in a strange flat voice. "I do not believe it, Emmy. Because you see—" He got up and threw his cigarette into the fireplace. "Because after we go, it will not matter what you do. We have lied to you, Emmy. There is a plane out there, Dan's plane. And there is plenty of gas for it in the shed—we looked there first, before we came in. Those things, Emmy, they are why we came here."

"The plane?" she said, repeating it slowly after him as if she had not understood what he meant. "The—It is too small to fly to Germany. It could never—"

He would not look at her. His lips drew back slightly as if he was angry with something or someone.

"No, Emmy. Not to Germany. But off the coast there are U-boats, many

of them, very near. If we get word to one, Willi thought, if we reach it at a time and place when we are expected—I remember then what you wrote me of Dan and the lake here, that he has a plane, a little one, a seaplane. Do you understand now?" His right palm began to pound softly against the mantel. "This Paul Becker—he is a different Paul Becker. He is someone you do not know. It is only when I look at you, when I think to myself—"

He stopped, breathless. But when she would have spoken, he held his hand up to her.

"Listen, Emmy. In Malone last night, in that store we entered, Willi called someone who can help us. He is clever, Willi; he reversed the charges, so no one can trace the call. And this friend he knows—there is a radio near by, in a truck; and this Willi's friend moves around so fast that no one can catch him. He is told that we are across the line, that we know where we might find a plane, that he must send a message to the U-boats, in code."

He hesitated, then went on slowly:

"Now Willi talks to him again—to make sure that everything is arranged. That tonight, fifty miles off the coast, a boat will be waiting for us, with a rocket to signal when we come near, so that we know where to descend. And if we miss it—that is too bad for Paul Becker and Willi Thaele. That is their finish, Emmy."

She had raised her head while he spoke; now she got up.

"That is—" she said twice, no more words in her.

"Insane." He smiled bitterly. "There are planes along the coast to shoot us down. They will hear us as soon as we leave here, because there are people who listen all night, every night. But Willi says that in the darkness it will not be so hard to slip by. And if we get back, we shall be great heroes—Paul Becker, Willi Thaele. Who else found a way from Canada? They will give us medals then. They will promote us. Bands, you understand, and a great crowd waiting for us. Willi sees those things already. And the Fuehrer—" His lips trembled oddly. "Perhaps the Fuehrer will be there too. Oh, yes! If he touches Willi, if he brushes him with his hand, I think Willi must faint."

He turned and looked around the room, with the light shining against his eyes.

"I think I would like it here," he said simply. "I think I would like it to—to be at peace again, Emmy. In the woods there was time to remember some things I had forgotten—little things. Crazy things, Willi would call them. And Emmy Braun—I thought of her too. I thought if I had come with her, if I had never let her get away from me—"

SOMETHING hurt her inside, something young and half remembered—Max's, and the spring darkness and the music. She said softly: "You are not an old man, Paul. There is time for you. You never believed the things Willi believes. Never. They will not harm you if you give yourself up here."

He smiled at her queerly; he shook his head without speaking to her. No, she thought, he would not do that. He felt another thing than fear. He felt—

Soundlessly, his lean face set, Willi came in from the porch. She had not heard him on the porch steps. Even Spot blinked at him.

"Now," he said, "now it is time to go." After a moment, as if Paul had asked him a question, he added with a slowness, a precise tension in his words: "Yes. Everything. It is all as I told you it would be."

"There is the gas," Paul said tonelessly. "We will have to carry it out of the shed. To row it—"

"And your friend?" Willi said. His head jerked toward her. "No one is to stay here with your friend?"

"Sometimes," Paul said angrily, "sometimes you are—"

"A fool," Willi said. The word came out quietly, unemphasized; when he heard it, making a small, irritable movement of the hand, Paul crossed the porch alone.

The blond man turned slightly, to stare after him.

For a time, minutes perhaps, Emmy did not move. Paul would have to

make many trips with the gasoline tins; and then they would have to check the motor. So they would not be gone when Dan came. It was now twenty-five to eleven. They would still be— She made some movement there, some sound, because the blond man turned from the doorway, where he had been looking out at the dock and Paul, to glance at her.

She moved toward him; she knew what she must do—get the gun from him now, before Dan came. If she were close to him, cheerful and friendly and encouraging—

"It is cold," she said, keeping a rigid smile on her lips. "But I think there is whisky here somewhere. Would you like me to get some for you?"

"Whisky." He stood in the doorway, not very old, hardly more than twenty-one. "You would like me to drink now. But I am not Becker. Did you think that I would get drunk for you?"

Becker. . . . The name, the indrawn violence with which he spoke it, meant something she could not understand.

"Coffee perhaps. It is no trouble."

"Nothing," he said. Then the right side of his mouth began to twitch blindly. "So Becker will give himself up now. Becker will— Be quiet!" His cheeks shone, white-hot in the pressure of some tremendous inner excitement. "I heard that. You did not close the porch door after I left. You did not hear me when I listened out there. Unfortunately! This Becker would like it to be peace—I knew that before. In the woods he was always quiet. Now listen to me: If he tries to fool me, if he thinks—"

He turned toward the dock again, breathing raggedly. Only then did Emmy understand him. What had Paul said? He trusted no one. Now he did not trust Paul. It seemed fantastic. A small, choked sound bubbled in her throat. Spot sneezed twice, then rubbed himself against her ankle.

"Good dog," she said, speaking, stroking his ears, without seeing him. She could not get the gun; Willi was too careful for that. But she must warn Dan. She must tell him—somehow, some way—that the blond man would be waiting for him.

WHEN her hand tightened, Spot put his head around and nuzzled it plaintively, a small brown-and-white dog who expressed many things he could not put into words. Emmy looked down at him. . . . Spot, she thought, Spot—

She kept her hand on him for ten seconds; it seemed forever. Then she straightened. Spot—Spot, of course!

"I'll make the coffee," she said. "Paul will want some."

He did not answer her. She went out to the kitchen—to the stove on the left, which he could not see from the living-room doorway—and put water in the coffee-pot, and made some noise with the lid. Willi was careful; she was careful too. After that, her fingers shaking, she reached for the pad and pencil that were hung on the wall just over the sink.

Spot had come out with her—she did not even have to call him. And it was only Spot and the note that she needed now—the note which would be wrapped around his collar, low down on the right side, away from Willi, when he trotted out to the porch.

It had all become clear, exactly detailed, in her. Spot would do what she told him to do, because Spot was a good little dog; he would go down to the highway and wait for Dan where the lake road cut through.

When Mr. Abbott's car came, and Dan got out, Spot would bark and jerk his head sidewise until Dan saw the note. Yes, she thought; that was the way it would happen now. Sure of everything then, seeing it unfold detail by detail in her mind, words spilled out in small, fierce letters the moment she had the pencil in her fingers.

"Get the rifle in the shed," she wrote. "*Be careful. Come up through the woods to the side porch. I'll keep him in the living-room. There's—There's another one,*" she meant to write, "*near the shed. You must be careful there too.*" But before she could trace the words, Spot growled warningly at the kitchen doorway. She knew who was there—Willi.

"Spot!" she said, as if angry with him, crumpling the note up, trying to hide it in her palm, as she turned. But she was not quick enough. Before she moved more than her head, Willi was beside her, grasping her wrist, twisting it up and over, until pain made it useless.

The moment he touched her, Spot went for him with a throaty snarl. Almost as quickly the blond man jumped back, the note in his hand; then his leg shot out, and caught Spot on the side of the neck.

IT was a savage kick—one that sailed Spot across the room like a sack; he crashed into the closet door, lay for a moment making a queer, almost human effort to breathe; but he had not quite managed it when Willi lifted him, threw him into the closet and turned the lock on him.

"Careful," Willi said, breathing heavily, flicking his eyes across the scrawled words. "So you will keep me in the living-room for him—until he has the rifle, until he reaches the side porch. Then he can get rid of me. Then he can give himself up, and Willi cannot stop him."

He whispered the words, so sure of their truth that he asked for no confirmation from her. And in an instant she understood what he thought—that she had written the note for Paul. Who else was here?

"Or was it for me?" he breathed at her. "Is that what you would try to tell me?"

He backed toward the living-room as he spoke, watching the windows, turning his head quickly to each side of him. Always there were enemies—the man in the trench-coat had told him that, and he had never forgotten it. Always there were crafty men waiting to fool him and to betray him. In the woods, in the ten days of hunger and eternal watchfulness, he must have thought of those words over and over. "Be careful," he had been told; "be strong; be unflinching; be pitiless." Paul Becker was with





him—yes. But in a world of enemies, in that lifetime of desperate and cunning survival, he must have thought of Becker too, again and again. Perhaps even Becker— So he listened on a porch; he found a note; and then he knew that the man in the trench-coat had spoken the truth; then he was back in a world he had known long before the prison-camp.

It was as if Emmy saw him for a moment, nakedly and simply, in a way she had not seen him till then. She whispered after him, trying to stop him, while Spot barked furiously in the closet, and threw his small body against the door. *Wait*, she tried to say. It had not been meant for Paul. He must not hurt Paul. Would he listen to her?

He did not even look at her. Lies—he knew what they were. The man in the trench-coat had hammered it into his head over and over. Words were nothing. For the soldier there was a different answer, a stronger faith. And in the woods he had felt the menace, patient and quiet—waiting, watching, just beyond his sight no matter how swiftly he swung himself around to look at it. And Becker silent beside him—knowing what it was, laughing at him, it might be Becker.

"Willi!" she called in a loud voice. "Willi!"

But he was in the living-room then, turning down the lamp so that Paul would not see him against the light; and when she pushed herself clumsily

away from the sink and ran after him, he had reached the porch steps.

He crouched there, half turned to the shed. Spot barked again, frantically muffled, as if he were a great distance away. Below them the shed door was open, light flowing out from the inner side. She knew where the rifle was—on two nails, high up on the wall where Teddy could not possibly reach it. Just over the gasoline tins, so that when Paul saw them, when he hung the lamp up over them—

SHE tried to call him again, fighting against the enormous softness and thickness that hung in her throat. And then Paul backed out through the doorway, tins under each arm, and

Willi came out of the shed. "Don't run." Emmy said. "Don't try to get away."

She tried to pull him around, to get at his gun. "No," she breathed. "No." But he did not heed her. He jumped down the steps away from her, firing four times, his mouth contorted, his arm, his body, jerking a little after each shot.

"Paul," she said, very softly. "Paul."

She closed her eyes for a moment. When she opened them, Willi was down by the shed, moving quickly through a half-circle of lantern light. She followed him part of the way, till she reached the place where she could kneel by Paul and shake him foolishly.

"I tried to tell him," she said. "Listen to me, Paul. I tried to—"

The blond man ran past her to the dock; gasoline tins clattered there. She heard small sounds—Willi breathing, the water, the wind, the boat creaking against the dock. She did not move at all. She knelt there, almost as still as Paul, because now she could see the rifle under him, in the place where his body had been before she touched it. Then Willi ran back to the shed, and she took her hands away from Paul's shoulders. She

He was just someone coming out of the darkness of the shed, out of a darkness greater than that in the shed, the lamplight blurring him, letting her see only his hands, the stiff blond hair, the side of his face. And there were confused things, fragments of thoughts, in the darkness behind him—Paul Becker, Maxl's, the student in Berlin she had never seen, and could never forget.

"Don't run," she said. Her voice was like a solid bar in her throat. She could not have swallowed. "Don't try to get away."

BUT he must have expected something else in her; he did not understand that in the instant he moved, he became her enemy; he did not see that in the end the world he believed in was the world he had made her accept.

When he jumped back, whipping the tins at her, throwing himself toward the doorway, she sobbed. She felt the rifle jerk in her hands. It seemed a long while after before a sound, a flat sound no louder than a stick breaking, rolled away across the lake.

Illustrated by Hamilton Greene

something lean and dark—the rifle—balanced across the tops.

Paul put down the cans; he stooped and picked up the rifle and turned it over in his hands. Perhaps she managed his name then, because he looked up at them and came a step toward them, as if he had heard something, without being sure what it was.

And Willi breathed in front of her—long, deep. He had everything he needed then, the one last fact that made all the others complete in him.

reached over Paul and got the rifle. It was all done in a moment. She did not have to think about it. The gun was there, and she drew it up against her body.

Dan always kept it loaded—she remembered that. So if she needed it any time, if tramps came and would not leave when she told them to—

Willi came out of the shed. He stopped in the doorway, perhaps one step clear of it, as soon as he saw the gun. But he didn't seem to be Willi any more; she had forgotten his name.

Willi fell. He drew in a long breath, shakily, and then he became very still. She sobbed again; she threw the rifle away from her, and ran to the house, across the porch, through the dark living-room, up the stairs.

But Teddy only stirred a bit, drowsily, when she stopped by the bed.

"Hush," she said. She crept in beside him, pressing her face close to the small body. It was all right then; it was quiet there, and safe. She did not cry; she only moved much later, when a car honked twice at the end of the lake road, and she knew that Dan was home.



Whisper

The Story Thus Far:

"I WISH to offer you my services as a soldier," said Duncan McGregor when after a long sea voyage he had won audience with the Duke of Valdivia, Viceroy of the Spanish King in Peru.

"Refused—without thanks," replied the Duke scornfully.

But Duncan was persistent—for he had to win his way. As a mere stripling he had fought for Bonnie Prince Charlie at Culloden. . . . An exile, he had made a new life for himself in France and had risen to command one of the King's regiments, when he fell in love with the daughter of the Spanish ambassador. And that was a misfortune, for she had been promised to Prince Bertrand de Cazenave-Cavalli; and that wily courtier challenged Duncan—and arranged to have the duel stopped by the King's officers and the blame placed upon Duncan. So Duncan had to bid Dolores a sad farewell, and flee from Europe.

Soon here in Lima the fame of Duncan's swordplay spread and won him a place in the Duke's personal bodyguard. And then—the King sent a personal aide to check up on the Viceroy; and that aide proved to be none other than the Prince Cazenave; and the Prince was accompanied by his young wife Dolores and her old *duenna* Manuela. But it was Dolores' maid Juanita who told Duncan the true state of affairs:

"I'm not the one to talk scandal," said Juanita. "And yet—"

"Not once since their marriage has the Prince been permitted to cross the threshold of his bride's apartment—not even on their wedding-day."

Duncan listened. His heart sang. (The story continues in detail.)

SCOTS

by Achmed

SOMEWHERE on the wide Pacific a wind sprang up. It twisted riotously about the cluttered Lima waterfront; it crackled in the maze of narrow cobblestoned alleys like an intricate and melodramatic Spanish court intrigue; it upset the papers on the desk of a Catalan ship-chandler and sucked up a flake of the tobacco which his mestizo clerk was stuffing into a long white clay pipe. It continued its erratic, predatory course among the clamors and odors of the marketplace; it picked up a grain of aromatic goat-cheese here, a bit of vanilla bark there, a speck of cacao somewhere else; it added two slivers of sweet red and three of pungent green pepper from a Chibcha grocer's gay pyramid of vegetables; it helped itself to a minute shred of sugarcane that a small dreamy-eyed boy, his mind dwelling on Pizarro's past glories, was solemnly chewing; it entered

a *bodega* where it robbed the paunchy Galician owner of a dozen assorted molecules of yellow sherry and ruddy malaga.

On roared the wind until finally, laden and spiced with particles of nicotine, food and alcohol, it blew through the open windows of the *compañeros'* house and tickled the flaring nostrils of Dirk van Buskirk.

He sneezed, woke up, yawned, touched his throbbing temples with a probing finger.

"*Allemachtig!*" he groaned. "The morning after, and ever so much less pleasant than the night before—which doubtless points a moral lesson."

His eyeballs smarted. His lips and throat felt like eggshells, brittle and dry; and he decided that a hearty draught (nor of water) was indicated.

Once more he yawned; then he got up and—his feet not obeying him very well—went to the table where a round



A CALEDONIAN CAVALIER FIGHTS TO FREE THE NEW WORLD FROM OLD SPAIN—BUT CERTAIN PRETTY LADIES COMPLICATE HIS CAREER.

Illustrated by
John Fulton

HIDALGO

Abdullah

bottle of mellow Valencia brandy and a square bottle of raw, potent native *pisco* stood companionably side by side. He cursed as he stumbled over the outstretched legs of one of the seven rogues—they were all noisily asleep—and grinned when he saw Duncan McGregor, who sat with his head buried in his hands.

The Fleming filled two goblets, mixing brandy and *pisco* in equal, deadly doses. He drank one—gasped, felt better, smacked his lips.

"The moral lesson," he said, "is lost on me."

He brought the other goblet to his friend, tapped him on the back.

"A hair of the dog, comrade?" was his reasonable suggestion.

The Scot did not look up. "No, no!" he said weakly.

Dirk's grin widened. He reflected with satisfaction that the other might be a better swordsman than himself,

but was assuredly not as sound a drinker.

"Headache?" he inquired.

"Heartache," Duncan sighed. He thought of Dolores; he recalled how she had smiled at him, with such cutting, impersonal contempt, as if he were some coarsely amorous stable-groom, when she had seen him a few hours earlier kissing Juanita's warm mouth, an arm tenderly about the girl's waist.

His elbow touched the glass where Dirk had put it. He picked it up and sipped; presently he too felt better, and less gloomy.

He knew what he was going to do.

With Doña Manuela Panfilo arranging the time and the place, he would meet Dolores and talk to her. He would tell her the honest, unvarnished truth: how the knowledge that she had not forgotten him, the yet more wonderful knowledge that she

was wife to Prince de Cazenave-Cavalli merely in name, had gone to his head like strong wine. He had been intoxicated with joy and happiness; there had been the invitation of Juanita's red lips. And so—Yes, it would be easy to explain. Dolores would understand.

ABRUPTLY he reconsidered. . . . Doubt assailed him. Would she as much as try to understand, or even listen to him?

He knew Dolores: So lovely she was, so adorable. But not soft—no, not soft.

Indeed, there was a certain Spanish diamond-hardness at the core of her young soul, a habit of seeing the black and the white, but never the gray; a habit, too, of counting only the stark facts of a case, nor bothering about the why and wherefore.

The way, for instance, she locked her bedroom door, night, after night, against her husband. And, surely, the latter also loved her; surely he also had tried to explain why he had done what he had done. . . .

Duncan rose; he walked up and down. Pride, he mused, that's what it was—her Castilian pride, stiff and unbending; almost as stiff and unbending as his own Highland pride.

"So terribly proud!" he murmured.

Dirk heard the mumbled words and frowned his astonishment. . . . Juanita proud?

Why, from many an agreeable experience he was familiar with the like of her: Pretty enough, yet not worth getting sentimental about—just a flighty little kiss-me-quick, hug-me-tight wench, the giggly, cuddly sort whose love was a laugh and a tussle.

"Listen, comrade!" he said. "Let me, with my hoary wisdom, put you straight in regard to this baggage of a Juanita."

"Who," angrily, "is speaking of her?"

"You are, aren't you?"

"I am not. I am speaking of a girl who— Ah,"—with that style of curiously stilted diction which was his in moments of elation—"when I think of her! That exquisite face! Like a song that Sappho might have sung to the Greeks of Rhodes, or perhaps of Cyprus! A song made of wine and honey—red wine and golden honey!"

The Fleming smiled tolerantly.

"You are drunk—bless your heart!" he announced; then turned as there came a knock at the door.

"Come in!"

ON the threshold stood Doña Manuela Panfilo,—shriveled, gnome-like,—grimacing like a small malicious monkey when she saw Duncan.

"And how," she exclaimed, "is my gay Scots *Don Juan* this fine morning? At his lordly ease, I suppose—warm slippers on his feet, plying the tooth-pick, steeped in content, having bravely supped and liquored and fondled a strapping, shameless hussy?"

He ran up to her.

"You"—his words stumbled over each other—"you are bringing me a message—from *her*?"

"You might call it that."

"Tell me! Tell me! Is it—"

"Good, you want to know, or bad? One to stir your heart and cause it to whisk and frisk like a happy little lamb, or to lacerate it to bleeding pulp?" And Manuela laughed shrilly. "That is for you to decide; although, being a man and young, thus doubly a fool, you are certain to interpret it the wrong way. . . . *Ai-ai-ai!*" she cried. "What a sweet little mistress I have! Heart-of-the-rose! Birdsong-at-the-lip! Twin-stars-in-her-eyes! So sweet—and yet so wise! Wise with the wisdom of all womankind! If you could see into her brain—which of course you cannot—"

"I want to know," Duncan interrupted impatiently, "what she asked you to tell me."

"Nothing."

"Eh?"

"Nothing."

"But—"

"Instead, she is sending you this."

She gave Duncan a small package; then she stabbed a bony finger at his chest.

"Did I say sweet mistress?" she went on. "Did I say wise mistress? Too, a most devout mistress, who has the Blessed Trinity and all the Saints constantly in her pure soul. For every evening she goes to church, and makes there the Stations of the Cross, and prays for the deserving as well as the undeserving."

Once more her laughter shrilled mockingly. Then she went away, while Dirk, who had been listening to every word, smiled shrewdly as he put two and two together.



"How," exclaimed Doña Manuela, "is my gay Don Juan this fine morning?"



"By my faith," he declared, "but your passion flies high! No less than a Prince's wife for you, eh?"

He refilled his glass and raised it.

"Hail, little comrade!" he cried. "May all your exploits be wicked and pleasant!"

Duncan did not reply. Perhaps he had not heard.

His trembling hands still clutched the package. Did it, he wondered, hold a written line or two, telling him that Dolores forgave him? Or maybe a flower—a red rose that spoke of love?

The paper crinkled, and even before he drew it off fully, he knew by

the hard, round little lump inside, what it contained: A ring.

A second later, it dropped out and rolled on the floor.

He picked it up. It was a simple jewel: a narrow silver band with a shield on which the slogan of his branch of the clan was engraved.

"*Gregarach gu bragh*," the slogan said in the Gaelic: "Clan Gregor for ever!"

And he remembered how he had slipped the ring from his father's finger when the latter had died on Culloden's bloody heath, fighting for the Stuart cause. Not because of its value—for an Edinburgh pawnbroker, amazed at his own generosity, might have advanced a couple of shillings on it—but because it had been his

family's most ancient possession, indeed since long before the days, lost in the gray mists of time, of King Robert de Bruce. It held, Duncan's father had once told him, the soul of his clan and the luck of his clan.

DUNCAN had been born and bred in this modern, skeptical Eighteenth Century—the century of Voltaire and Rousseau and Montesquieu and Adam Smith that balanced precariously on the edge of disbelief and found this edge sharp and uncomfortable. Thus, for all his Scots blood, he scoffed at superstition. Yet—and, while he hated to admit it, he was too honest to deny it—whenever he touched the ring, as he was doing now, he became conscious of a mys-

terious force that tugged at his heart-strings—a force that seemed to sweep out of the past into the present, thence into the future, blending past and present and future into one element: the soul of his clan and the luck of his clan.

Here it was, in this narrow silver band. And one day, prizing it more highly than anything else he owned, he had given it to Dolores.

That had been in France, not far from Versailles.

A spring morning it had been, rose and gold and heliotrope. There had been a royal hunt, with King Louis rather clumsily astride a roan stallion; the ladies and gentlemen so gay in scarlet and bottle-green; the luckless fox pursued through woods and orchards and fields; and the peasants grumbling as horse and hound had clattered through the sprouting crops and as occasionally a whip had lashed sideways and an insolent voice had shouted:

"Out of the way, villain!"

On that day there had been the wail of the huntsman's horn, the ringing shouts:

"Yoicks! Yoicks!"

"There goes the fox!"

"For'ard, hounds! For'ard!"—with the hunt sweeping on, and Dolores and Duncan galloping stirrup to stirrup.

He had glanced at her, so tiny, like a precious Sèvres figurine in her green riding-habit with the tight bodice and flaring skirt; he had wondered how any human being could be so amazingly lovely; he had noticed, between the Chantilly lace collar and the brim of her plumed tricorne, the curve of her sweet slender neck and the black tresses gathered up in a knot like a very little girl's.

There had been something heart-breaking in it, rather like a child's softly curled fingers; and Duncan had longed to kiss her. He had told her so in a whisper, and she had replied with a laugh:

"What are you waiting for?"

"But how can I—here in the midst of the hunt?"

"And you a soldier, familiar with tactics and strategy! If I were a soldier—"

"What would you do?"

"I would watch my chance, and—"

"Yes?"

"Prepare an ambush."

He had saluted, bowing from the saddle.

"At your orders, Colonel Dolores!"

They had reined in their horses, falling a little behind the others. Presently, with the hunt disappearing in a spinney, they had wheeled, taken a side trail into a deep forest, and dismounted in a clearing.

THERE they sat down and as so often before, he had taken her in his arms and kissed her; he had, as so often before, told her the tale of his love—which is the one tale, ever the same and ever new, of all lands and of all ages, trick it with glittering or sentimental words as we may.

Then he had given her the silver ring.

"It holds," he had said to her, "the soul of the M'Gregors—which, from now on, is your soul. It holds the luck of the M'Gregors—which would be ill luck, without you to guide it. Keep it, best beloved, as a bond between you and me that can never be broken."

"Never!" she had echoed.

Yet here today, was the little silver ring twirling in his fingers. It brought a clear message: she had broken the bond—had broken it, he thought angrily, for no better reason—such a silly, childish reason—than that he had kissed a girl.

He told himself truthfully that the kiss had meant nothing, nothing. It had been given on an impulse, with no passion in it nor tenderness; it had been merely a gesture, expressive of the gayety that had swelled in his soul when Juanita had told him how it was with Dolores and the Prince.

And for Dolores to do what she had done, to tell him silently: "We are through, you and I!" without as much

as giving him an opportunity to explain—why, it wasn't fair!

Stiff-necked Spanish pride, that's all it was, the sort of pride which refused to count the cost to herself and to him in happiness or unhappiness.

So Duncan thought; and in a way he was right.

Yet, had he known, cutting even more deeply than her hurt pride, had been her disillusion, the blow to her hopes which had soared high—perhaps too high. For when Doña Manuela had told her that Duncan was here in Lima, that she had spoken to him on the quay, Dolores had been gloriously happy, and her imagination had winged toward a golden future.

She had prayed for this future, kneeling in her *priedieu* before the image of the Virgin.

"O Holy Mary, Mother of God," she had prayed, "now that I have found him again, do not take him away from me! Let it be him and me—together!"

Not that the Church would allow her a divorce. On the other hand, the Church was reasonable and understanding: surely it would grant annulment of her marriage once she proved, as she could, that the Prince and she had never lived as husband and wife, and that, moreover, the wedding had been the result of lies and deceit.

Yes, her hopes had soared.

Then, early this morning, on her way to church, passing the *compañeros'* house, she had seen Duncan and Juanita in each other's arms. And something in her soul had cracked, then hardened.

To her—and here Duncan was right in his judgment of her—there was no gray, only black and white; there were no half-lights, no half-truths. A thing was, or it was not. Facts alone mattered: one of the facts was love; either it existed, or it did not exist; and in Duncan's case it evidently did



not, where *she* was concerned. For, according to her simple, rather stark reasoning, a man kissed a woman only for desire—and since Duncan desired Juanita, he could not, therefore, have love for Dolores. So, rightly or wrongly she reckoned life; and as her hopes had tumbled, her pride had risen.

She had sent back the ring with its silent, chilly message. And yet, while Duncan was pacing up and down, unhappy and brooding and morose, angry at her, bitterly blaming her, she was forgetting this same pride of hers because of her terrible fear of what might happen to him; she was humbling herself before her husband.

A few moments earlier, without knocking, she had entered the Prince's apartment. He looked up, astonished: then he rose and exclaimed:

"A rare visitor, upon my honor! I am delighted—and flattered!"

She waved his irony aside.

"I heard you," she said, "a few minutes ago, talking to your bravos."

"You,"—mockingly,—"*put an ear to your—ah—locked bedroom door? You eavesdropped?*"

"Call it that. I heard you; and Bertrand, I beg of you—don't do it!"

"What?"

"Murder."

"A harsh word!"

"Do you know another for the same deed? Please, please,"—in driving, heartrending accents,—"*don't*—"

"My dear," he interrupted, glancing at her down his long aristocratic nose, "*aren't we fools to imagine that our human emotions can influence the course of implacable fate? You see, personally I've an idea that, from the beginning of time, your lover was meant for a dagger between his shoulder-blades.*"

MOMENTARILY, her resentment at the affront overcame her fear.

"He is not my lover!" she cried.

"Then how did you find out that he is here, in Lima? He must have sent you word."

"He did not. I discovered it by chance—as, I suppose, you did."

"Even so, he is your lover."

"He is not!"

"Whv lie to me?" The Prince's voice trembled to a furious falsetto. "The thought of him has never left your mind, not once, since our marriage—"

"Into which I was tricked!"

"Possibly. After all,"—smiling faintly,—"*there is a Catalan proverb which says that, if you cannot take things by the head, it's advisable to take them by the tail. That's what I did. And now—can you deny it?—we are married.*" Once more his sardonic amusement gave way to rage.

"But you," he shouted, "have been false to your marriage vows, in



"It is a mistake to make the path of love too easy for conceited young men."

thought if not in deed! Locking your bedroom door against me, because of him! And that cheap little ring he gave you—always carrying it next to your heart, aren't you?"

She blushed; she felt as if her inmost secret had been violated.

"How," she stammered, "how do you know?"

"Not *all* your servants are above taking a bribe."

A silence, then she said:

"I sent him back the ring."

"Why did you?"

"For a reason which you wouldn't understand."

"Oh—the turtledoves pecked at each other? The lovers quarreled?"

"I repeat that he is not my lover."

"And I repeat that I don't believe you."

"It is the truth. I swear it by the Eight Blessed Beatitudes."

"An oath, I admit, which you would not dare break. Very well, he is not your lover. Nor"—slowly, significantly,—"*come to think of it, am I!*"

There was another silence. Their eyes met, contended, like two blades crossing in a duel.

Then she said—and her voice was queer, as if it belonged to somebody else: "*You might be my lover—if—*"

"If what?"

"Your hired bravos hold the answer."

"Oh, yes! The daggers of my hired bravos—and the shoulder-blades of a man who is *not* your lover, but still dear to you, eh?"

She did not reply. He laughed.

"I wonder," he continued, "if the price which you demand is worth it."

"The price," was her shamed whisper, "*will be worth it. But you must give me your word of honor.*"

"Very well. Only—how do you know that I shall keep it?"

"You"—wildly—"aren't you a gentleman?" she demanded.

"I'm a Prince, my dear; I don't have to be a gentleman. Anyway, who knows? Perhaps I shall keep my promise. It is a question of mood—and mood, too, will dictate when I shall exact payment for the promise."

She stared at him.

"I hate you," she said coldly.

"And I,"—a brittle note of tragedy crept into his voice,—"*happen to love you, in my own way. That's why—*" He interrupted himself. "Never mind; at least you prove by your hate that you're not entirely indifferent to me."

He turned to go.

"Incidentally," he added over his shoulder, "*being in Peru, this crude colonial land, we must be doubly careful about our Spanish etiquette. So you must not go about without a proper escort, a detail of retainers—neither you nor your trusted Manuela. They will guard you in case some rash caballero should have the effrontery to speak to you—or in case you should be foolish enough to speak to some rash caballero, to give him warning, belike, of a promise which may or may not be kept.*"

HE bowed deeply and left. Dolores sobbed as if her heart would break; and then Manuela came in and folded the girl to her lean breast.

"What is the matter with you, child?" demanded the old nurse. "Are you crying because of that worthless husband of yours? By the Mass! A fine thing it is to redden your nose—such a small nose!—and your eyes for his sake!"

Dolores sniffled.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "you are wrong! I'm not crying because of Bertrand!"

"I see. Crying because of the other scoundrel—is that it?"

"The—the other?"

"The Scottish one."

"He is *not* a scoundrel!"

"He is!"

"No!"

"Yes!" Manuela found it hard to keep from laughing at Dolores' denial, as she remembered how incensed the latter had been at Duncan just a few hours earlier. "Drinking—carousing—making love to low hussies! Pahl! There's less worth in him than there are hairs in the beard of the beardless!"

"It isn't so!"

"It is too! I saw the abandoned way he behaved, and so did you!"

"Still, what right have you to lay down the law? You"—Dolores forgot her hurt pride and how quick she had been at judging and condemning

Duncan—"you are so intolerant, so narrow-minded!"

"And what about yourself? Sent him back his ring, didn't you?"

Here was something which Dolores could not deny. Momentarily she was tongue-tied, finding herself caught in a net of her own passionate weaving. She did not know how to get out of it. Her conscience began to prick her. Therefore, like many a woman (and for that matter many a man) she took refuge in obduracy.

"I was right," she announced.

ONCE more laughter bubbled to Manuela's lips. She changed it to a cough.

"Of course you were right," she agreed. "That's what I've been telling you. A scoundrel, your precious Duncan! Nor different from other young men; they're all as peas in a pod—all shameless and wicked, like tomtcats yowling on a roof."

Well,"—severely,—“there's one tomtcat, a Scots tomtcat, to whom I shall have a few things to say the next time I see him."

"Oh!" Manuela's cough became more pronounced. "See him, I suppose, to forgive him?"

"I shall never forgive him!"

"Which proves your profound feminine sagacity! Never forgive a man, not even when you yourself are in the wrong; always keep something heavy over his head—to drop on him, on future occasions. . . . But tell me, how do you propose to break the ice? What (being so angry at him) will you say when you see him?"

Dolores hesitated. "Well—"

"Don't tell me! Let me guess! There is your pride, your stiff, rigid code of conduct where young men, and tomtcats, and their evil behavior are concerned. On the other hand,"—with withering sarcasm,—“you consider it your unselfish Christian duty to make Duncan understand the error of his ungodly ways. *Ai-ai-ai!* If all young men are alike, so are all young women! Always ready—how did my grandmother put it?—to stoop low for the sake of rising the more high! Always ready to throw a soothing, self-righteous sop at their conscience! Always ready to have their wine—and sip it too!"

The old nurse's long-quelled mirth burst forth raucously; and a second later quite against her will, Dolores joined in it. It was an embarrassed laugh, since it was directed against herself. She decided to mend her fences to the best of her ability.

"Whatever are my reasons—and," (haughtily) "they are none of your business—I shall talk to Duncan. But I'll not have you around when I do so—you, with your nosy, snooping ways!"

"Nosy and snooping enough to get you out of trouble more often than you deserve! Take my advice: If you want to meet Duncan—"

And then suddenly Dolores' eyes filled with tears. She threw herself down on a couch, and beat the pillows with her fist.

"What's wrong *now?*" Manuela asked.

"I'm so unhappy! So dreadfully unhappy! I—I'll never be able to meet Duncan again, to speak to him. Nor," with a shiver of fear, "to warn him! For there are the Prince's people, who'll watch me wherever I go, who'll see to it that I can't—"

She broke into a storm of choking sobs, and the old nurse said gruffly:

"Stop this! You're behaving as you used to years ago, when you were a baby—and a most disgusting, puling baby you were! Tell me what happened, if you want my help."

"Nobody can help me."

"I can. Don't I always?"





"Aren't you a gentleman?" she demanded. "I'm a Prince, my dear; I don't have to be a gentleman."

Then Dolores related what had occurred, and the old nurse smiled.

"The foolish sparrow with a screech," she quoted the peasant saying, "and the wise owl with a wink! I,"—calmly,—*"am wise. The Prince is not. For I know a spot which is safe*

from suspicious, punctilious Spanish etiquette—a spot where, by the same token, you can find refuge from your husband's servants and hidalgos and their clacking, leaky tongues."

Hope came to Dolores.

"Yes?" she asked.

"A spot which, like the good child you are, you visit each day, and twice on Sundays."

"Church?"

"Yes. And if Duncan should find his way there—and indeed why shouldn't he?—it'll do his soul good."

"**Y**OU ought to be ashamed of yourself!" Dolores interrupted. "To suggest that I should use the Lord's house as a place of—of—"

"Pah!" Manuela cut in sharply. "Spare me your pietism! I'm as good a Christian as you are—perhaps better, being older than you and having had more experience in appreciating the sweet truths of our faith. And I have always believed that there is more gladness than grief in the shadow of the Blessed Cross, and that our dear Savior closes a tolerant eye on the little sins of young people in trouble."

She paused.

"Anyway," she went on, "knowing well your husband, cousin to the toad and second cousin to the horned viper, I guessed what he would do, and so—"

"You—you told Duncan where he might find me?"

"I did not tell him, exactly, for it is a mistake to make the path of love too smooth and easy for conceited young men."

"Who"—indignantly—"is talking of love?"

"I am, and you are thinking of it. At all events, I dropped him a hint. And if he has any sense at all, he'll guess what I meant."

There Manuela was mistaken.

IT was not that Duncan was devoid of sense. Indeed, he had a good deal of it: hard, square Scots common sense. Only perhaps it was too hard, too square, too Scots; was thus unfit to cope with the coiling, self-involved Spanish juggleries in which Manuela's brain delighted.

So her gliding allusion, about Dolores going daily to church, had been lost on him. All he knew was that the ring had been sent back, that the bond was broken—and he kept on walking up and down, brooding and unhappy. What he thought morosely, was the good of complaining? Always, somewhere on the scales of human emotion, indifference, even dislike, began and love came to an end for one of half a dozen reasons, grave or negligible. That was life: its irony and bitterness.

"Such things," he told himself, "happen to everybody. Why not to me?"

Well—he'd have to make the best of it, since the worst had already been done; and he recalled a song which, years ago, when he had been a child, his Highland nurse had sung to him:

*Lad, lad, what should ye be wishing?
A crock o' gold and an easy life. . .*

Old Annie M'Iver had been right, as the Fleming and the seven snoring rogues were right. He looked at them: brisk, lusty men without a thought except for their lawless whims and rich appetite.

A crock o' gold and an easy life!

And if life were not so easy—not easy, that was on a gentleman's conscience to be the captain of the *compañeros del Virey*, the leader of spies and bravos and bullies—then, at all events, the crock of gold would be filled to overflowing. For Serafino the Indian had assured him that His Excellency was generous when he was well and loyally served. This reminded Duncan that there was the report he had to make to the Viceroy.

Last night, between drinking and dancing and kissing, he and the others had listened to the wine-loosened tongues of the Spanish servants and had heard a good deal of gossip about the Prince's plans.

He said to Dirk:

"Find out anything special from the red-haired girl you squired around all evening?"

"Yes. Something about the Viceroy himself—something of which I am afraid, and which I would rather forget."

"Namely?"

Dirk told him, and Duncan smiled. "When," he inquired, "did she sell you this bit of gammon? After her second bottle of sherry or her third?"

"She was as sober as I."

"Which proves my point."

"An obvious rejoinder. And yet she spoke the truth. How else could she know the name? Could she have made it up out of her own head? I know the name. For I've had certain unpleasant dealings—unpleasant for him, not me—with its bearer."

"But—"

"Let me finish, comrade! One day, while the red-head was brushing the Prince's clothes, an envelope fell out. It contained a copy of the church registry and a document attested by the only surviving witness, Domingo Galvez, the *alcalde* of Sapallanca, a little town high up in the Andes. And—listen closely!—His Excellency sent me there last year, and (may God forgive me!) the church burned to the ground, while the *alcalde* had a fatal accident." He grinned. "But His Excellency, it appears, was too late with his precautionary measures, since now the Prince is in the secret."

"But why don't others know? I mean, why hasn't your red-haired friend—"

"Why hasn't she blabbed? She did, being a woman. But since the knowledge frightened her, she spoke of it first to her father-confessor, who (oh, wise man!) commanded silence. But,"—and the Fleming gave a twirl to his yellow mustache and otherwise preened himself,—"*it seems that my manly charms are more potent than the direst penance threatened by Holy Church.*"

Dirk glanced at the seven rogues, who were beginning to stir.

"What," he asked, lowering his voice, "will you do with the information?"

"I shall give it to the Duke with the rest of my report."

"Dangerous!"

"I fail to see why. Surely the man knows the truth, if it *be* the truth, about himself."

"But he would not like others to know. And if they do know, he would see to it that their knowledge shouldn't go much farther. A dead horse cannot eat grass, and a dead man cannot whisper scandal."

"Even so, I consider it my duty as a gentleman—"

"What a noble yet silly thing it must be to be a gentleman! Person-

ally, when it comes to choosing between duty to myself and to others, I figure that my skin is nearer to me than my coat."

That afternoon, Duncan was summoned by Serafino. "His Excellency," said the Indian, "wishes to learn what you have found out, before he sees the Prince who is calling on him within the hour."

So Duncan presented himself in the audience hall of the palace.

It was a large chamber, magnificently furnished, the windows shaded by heavy drapes of plum-colored brocade, and lit by hundreds of wax tapers in tall sconces and swinging chandeliers of solid silver, sending out curly, wavering streams of light. There the Duke of Valdivia, in somber black satin, with the order of the Golden Fleece clasped about his scrawny neck, sat in pomp and state under a canopy of cloth-of-gold, gay with the blazonry of Castile and Leon, awaiting the Prince de Cazenave-Cavalli.

He was surrounded by a small group of his *caballeros*, and with wry amusement he was explaining to one of them—his Captain-General, the Marquis de la Fuente—that the King's emissary would be at an even worse social, and therefore diplomatic, disadvantage than before, when he had thought the Viceroy bedridden with an attack of fever.

"To call," he said, "so courteously, on a sick man, to see him up and about, and to be unable, though not unwilling, to call him a liar. Embarrassing, my dear Marquis, eh?"

"You will use his embarrassment, Your Excellency?"

"As suavely and as meanly as a banker uses the sneaking weapon of compound interest."

THE Viceroy turned to Duncan who had entered.

"This is your first day as captain of my *compañeros*. I understand you have done well."

"That is for you to decide, sir."

"Charming modesty! Well—what did you find out?" When the Scot hesitated, he went on: "Discretion is a fine thing. But," with a sweeping gesture, "I trust these *hidalgos*—possibly without reason."

There was a murmur of shocked protest, and the Viceroy laughed disagreeably.

"Very well," he added. "Let me put it the other way: I trust them, having discovered no reason, so far, to mistrust them."

"The Duke's humor," commented the Marquis de la Fuente, "is exquisite."

"The Duke's wisdom," rejoined the Duke, "is even more exquisite." Once more he addressed Duncan. "Any-

way, Captain, you have my permission to speak freely in front of these gentlemen."

"Freely, maybe, of what the Prince intends to do. But—"

"I,"—impatiently,—“am fully aware of what he intends to do. He wishes to provide telling cause for His Most Catholic Majesty to oust me from my exalted position, so that he may fill it himself. No secret about that, either in the salons of Madrid or here, in provincial Lima. But how and where does he propose to find the cause? I,”—smiling,—“am reasonably honest.”

"He has found the cause already."

"Eh?"

"Yet it is my belief that he is still debating with himself how to use it with the greatest, and perhaps the most cruel, effect."

AT this the Duke grew still more impatient.

"Don't be so mysterious!" he said. "Go on—tell me!"

"Not," replied Duncan in a low voice, "before these gentlemen." And he spoke a word, no more than a name, into the Viceroy's ear.

The latter gasped; he shook as if in an ague; Serafino rushed forward with a glass of wine.

The Duke drank. His face took on a greenish tinge. Perhaps it was the reflection of the green goblet; or perhaps, thought Duncan, the reflection of something deep in the man's soul, that part of the soul which broods over the memory of gall-bitter things. Somehow the Scot felt sympathy for the other, an almost tender sympathy.

"Please," he mumbled awkwardly, "Your Excellency—"

The Duke had dropped back in his chair, slumping like a rag doll filled with sawdust. He seemed empty of all emotion. But a moment later Duncan noticed the lean hairy hands; and he considered that a man devoid of feeling does not usually clench his fists until the knuckles stretch white and the veins swell.

The next second, with an enormous, unhuman effort, the Viceroy steadied himself. He got up, and while his *caballeros* muttered their astonishment and curiosity, he took Duncan by the arm and led him to a small room that opened from the audience hall.

A silence fell between the two men. Then the Scot asked straight out:

"Is it true?"

"I cannot deny it. A truth that should be a secret, and that is now known to four—the Prince, the girl, the Fleming, and you. Ah!"—like a bleak, terrible threat—"four too many!"

"What," demanded Duncan, "can you do about it?"

"One thing—I can destroy it."

"Truth is a hardy plant, difficult to uproot."

"But,"—slowly,—“it is not difficult to uproot those who know it.”

"Those four people?"

"Precisely."

Somehow, Duncan was less shocked than amused. The conversation between him and this other, dealing grimly and tensely with death, was yet so curiously polite and impersonal.

He said: "A dagger, not to forget the fist that wields it, is cheap to hire in Lima. I know, being one of the hired ones. Still, it would be a rash thing to do."

"Why?"

"Because murder demands careful preparation. And, if you take my case, not as a killer but one about to be killed, what is to prevent me from taking time by the forelock and telling your *hidalgos*, right here and now, the truth which you fear? Then a dozen would know it, and presently it would be shouted from the roof-tops."

The Duke inclined his head.

"That is so," he agreed.

"Of course," said the Scot, "there is something else, and so much wiser, which you could do."

"Yes?"

"You could have confidence in Dirk and me."

"Confidence,"—cynically,—“bought and paid for by my gold and your greed?"

"Paid by a coin more precious than gold and more honest than greed. Paid by that plain human quality which is called pity."

The Viceroy stiffened. "How dare you have pity for me, a Spanish Duke?" he demanded.

"My pity—if you will permit me to say it without giving offense—goes out to the part of you which is *not* a Spanish Duke."

The other smiled. It was a strangely soft, melancholy smile.

"Sir," he said, "you are a cavalier."

"Of course." No insolence was intended; an ordinary fact was being stated. "Am I not a M'Gregor?"

The smile widened; a smile, not of mockery, but of kindness and understanding.

"It must be great to be a M'Gregor."

"As great," with equal courtesy, "to be a Duke of Valdivia."

"Even the part of me which is *not* a—"

"More so," the Scot interrupted quickly.

"Shall we shake hands on it?"

"I would feel honored, Your Excellency."

So they spoke, with stiff decorum, the Highland gentleman and the dignitary of Spain. Palm firmly gripped palm. Blue eyes met brown eyes; it was a warm glowing moment of deep mutual liking and sentiment.

But this moment of sentiment passed. It was swallowed in the Duke's sudden cold announcement:

"I am still Viceroy of Peru, and you are still captain of my *compañeros*. My orders are—"

"Death," cut in the Scot, "to a Prince and a red-haired girl?"

"What a necromancer you are, to be able to read my mind!"

"Sir,"—stiffly,—“it goes against my grain to kill a woman."

"But not against your grain to kill the husband of another woman whom you—"

Duncan was amazed. "How do you know?"

"I have—remember?—a confidential servant, Serafino, who to quote his own words, can see the grass grow and hear the fleas cough."

Duncan shrugged his shoulders. Denial, indignant if untrue, would have served no point, either in practical logic or in thin-skinned honor.

"Just because there is this woman," he replied, "I can have no hand in killing her husband. In a fair fight, yes! But the other way, the furtive, dagger-up-the-sleeve way—"

"The safe, sure way!"

"That's why."

"And I had always supposed that Don Quixote was a Spaniard! Very well; I shall depute somebody else."

"I wouldn't, if I were you."

"More high-minded scruples?"

"No, merely my knowledge that the Prince is no fool. Surely he is aware of the danger, and if only for revenge, must have made arrangements to spread the secret even from beyond his grave."

"You are right. I shall have to think of a different way where the Prince is concerned. The Blessed Saints do not close one door without opening another."

HE spoke quite without hypocrisy. "And," he went on, "as to the red-haired girl—would it go against your grain if I should take certain reasonable precautions?" He laughed. "I'm afraid, though, it *will* go against your grain, since you were reared on the angular principles of John Knox. Still, consider the advantage, not only to me but also to the girl's immortal soul, of a convent cell where behind locked doors and in solitude she can meditate on the precepts of chastity and piety and obedience—and silence. At least until—"

He hesitated; and Duncan echoed: "Until—"

"Until my own plans—yes, I too have plans!—will have ripened. Plans"—and his irony left him, his accents were heavy—"which may appeal to you, to the generous, adventurous youth in you, and in which you may want to take a hand."

*"I come—you
will find the
proper war-
rant in this
paper—to
look into the
affairs of the
viceregency."*



There was, at this moment, blaring in from the vaulted corridors, a loud fanfare of trumpets.

"The emissary of His Most Catholic Majesty," said the Duke. "Come, Captain; your presence will give confidence to me and—I shouldn't wonder—lack of confidence to the Prince."

They returned to the audience chamber.

There, with Duncan standing by his side, the Viceroy sat down in his great chair of state which was carved with the gilt escutcheons of the fami-

lies of Rodriguez and Maldonado; shortly afterward, the bronze doors were flung wide, and Prince de Cazenave-Cavalli entered, pale and puffy and obese, clad sumptuously and unbecomingly in a court costume of shimmering satin whose color shifted from shade to shade as he moved. He was preceded by his chief lord-in-waiting who carried a thin roll of parchment tucked under one arm, and accompanied by his hidalgos who bowed deeply, hats in hand, the long crimson feathers sweeping the ground.

Here, then, was the first meeting between Duke and Prince. It was a meeting which in the motley, twisted annals of the viceregency of Peru assumed in the course of time, after its mysterious undercurrents had become clear, the character of something epic. For decades to come, it was mentioned with pride by the mestizos and *criollos* of Lima; and even in far Spain people commented with rather grudging admiration on its subtlety—a subtlety in what was said by Duke and Prince and, fully as much, in what was left



unsaid. They were—so, later on, Duncan told Dolores—like two fencers, each feeling for a chink in the other's armor where his blade might pierce.

The Prince spoke first

"Your humblest servant, Your Excellency!" he began, a hand on his heart. "This is an honor."

"An honor, Your Highness, to me, not to you. I trust you did not find it too great a strain on your royal dignity to visit, so courteously, a sick man?"

"A sick man who"—it was as neat a way as any of calling the Viceroy a liar—"recovered with an incredible swiftness worthy of Lazarus."

"Thanks to sweet Saint Anthony, to whom I prayed fervently, lighting seventeen tall candles each day before his image. Thanks, too, to the salubrious climate of Peru."

"It is salubrious," rejoined the Prince, and only the Duke and Duncan knew why his full lips curled sardonically, "at least to those who have the very salt of this land in their bones."

"Yet I believe it to be less salubrious to some people who come from abroad."

"You think so, Your Excellency?"

"Yes, Your Highness. Indeed,"—the blade was seeking for a chink where fear might enter,—"*I have known cases where such people were struck down suddenly by disease, and had hardly time to whisper a *paternoster* before they died.*"

The Prince moistened his dry lips; then quickly the chink where fear had entered vanished as a stout iron plate

of scandalous knowledge slid into place.

"You are referring," he asked—while again only the Viceroy and Duncan understood the allusion—"to a certain alcalde? A foolish alcalde who did not know how to use the"—he accentuated the word slightly—"secret of prevention which, I have an idea, is superior to cure?"

"You, of course, know this secret?"

"I do."

"Would you sell it for a price?"

"Why should I, since the highest price I might desire is mine for the taking?"

"I see."

There was perfect, steel-keen, steel-bright artifice in the urbane way in which they smiled at each other. Then the Prince took the roll of parchment from his chief lord-in-waiting.

"And now, Your Excellency," he said, "shall we, with your permission, to business?"

"Pleasant business?"

"How can it be else, since it is business of His Most Catholic Majesty? I come on his errand—you will find the proper warrant in this paper—to look into the affairs of the viceregency of Peru."

"And make favorable report?"

"It could not be aught but favorable, could it, Your Excellency?"

He held out the parchment, and in conformity with Spanish court etiquette, the Duke, before touching a document that bore the King's signature, rose from his chair. The carved gilt escutcheons came into full view, and the Prince smiled.

There were others, he reflected, who could find a chink in a man's armor—a chink in the quivering depths of a man's soul—

He pointed at the twined armorial bearings, topped by a crested ducal helmet.

"A glorious emblem, Your Excellency," he said, "which speaks of a glorious past." He paused. "You take an interest in heraldry?"

"Yes."

Again the Prince smiled.

"You know," he said, and his voice was ominously slurred and sweet, "formerly I had a servant, a clever rascal. He came from Sicily; he called himself Carracioli—you know the name, don't you? An ancient, princely clan! This rascal, too, was interested in heraldry; he had his dirty shirts embroidered with the Carracioli bees and leopards, claiming descent—and really, quite truthfully—from the Palermo branch of the family. But later I discovered that his father, a much-traveled man, had mated somewhere with either a Moorish woman or a Turk, or for all I know, a painted, tattooed, feather-decked South American savage. And so one day I quoted a prov-

erb to him, a Castilian proverb. Perhaps you are familiar with it, Your Excellency?" His voice was still more ominously sweet. "'Ask the mule who was its mother. And it will reply that the horse was its father.' Amusing, don't you agree?"

THERE was laughter then in the audience hall—laughter unaware of the stark, cruel tragedy which was being enacted here—and Duncan, feeling a tug at his hip, glanced at the Duke.

He saw the clamped jaws, the veins on the temples swelling like ropes, the eyes that stared at Cazenave-Cavalli with a sinister and unhuman ferocity.

Bloodshed—no doubt of it!—was in the Viceroy's mind. Murder beckoned alluringly to take her as shield and ally. But, clad with the formal punctilio of a Spanish salon, he was unarmed; and there being the invitation of Duncan's long sword, his fingers reached for it almost automatically.

The shiver and smell of death was in the air; but only for a second. It passed so swiftly that none, not even the Prince, realized it. For the Scot's hand pressed down on the Duke's shoulder. There was his whisper:

"Steady, sir! Steady!"

The Viceroy's fingers withdrew. They seemed to wilt, as his face seemed to wilt; haggard it was, twisted by a mortal pain in his heart. He passed his handkerchief over his forehead that was beaded with perspiration, and dropped it.

Duncan bent to pick it up; and just then the Prince became aware of his presence. He smiled.

"You have," he said to the Duke, "an unusual taste in—ah—lackeys."

This time it was Duncan who shook with murderous rage, and the Viceroy's hand that steadied him.

"You think so?" asked the Viceroy.

"Yes. A foreigner, a heretic"—an insolent, thick, jeweled finger stabbed at Duncan,— "when there are so many decent Spanish Catholics to be had."

The Duke had completely regained his composure.

Here was his chance, he decided, to give back hurt for hurt to the Prince, deadly insult for deadly insult.

"I take it," he inquired in tones so low that none of the others could hear, "that you object to foreign heretics?"

"Naturally, being a Spaniard and a Catholic."

"And yet—there is your wife. Is she not, too, a Spaniard and a Catholic?"

He said no more. And not long after, with another fanfare of trumpets, another sweeping of red-plumed hats, the audience ended.

That evening, the Viceroy invited Duncan to supper. Nobody else was

there except Serafino, who waited on them.

"I gave you half my confidence, Captain," said the Duke, "and now I shall give you the rest, lest—since you are sure to guess—you guess wrong."

He caught the glance which the Scot leveled at the Indian, and went on:

"Don't worry about him! Oh, yes, his fingers itch as soon as his nostrils sniff gold. But then we all have our sins, large or small. And you know mine, don't you, Serafino?"

Viceroy and servant exchanged a smile. It was an almost affectionate smile; a smile, moreover, which seemed to Duncan secretive, like a barrier that shut out the rest of the world.

He studied them more closely; and he had a sudden impression that these two were alike. Not physically alike, one being so tall and lean and angular of face, and the other short and squat and round-featured. But there was in both the same—he groped for a word, found it—the same spiritual essence, the same qualities of soul.

It was most curious.

And yet, he asked himself an instant later, *was it?* He remembered what the red-haired girl had confided to the Fleming; what the Viceroy had admitted. And going on from that knowledge— He cut short his disturbing thoughts as the Duke continued:

"I mentioned my plans, which are not altogether selfish?"

"Yes."

"Tell me: How modern are you?"

"How—modern?"

"Right. Are you familiar with the brilliant new minds of France and England, with Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Adam Smith and all the rest who are trying to change this universe of ours, trying to make it more rational and more decent?"

DUNCAN was taken aback. He had expected some startling revelation, some stirring, melodramatic and picaresque plot. And here the other was talking in the precise, dry-as-dust manner of an Scots schoolmaster.

Some of his surprise must have shown in his eyes, for the Viceroy laughed.

"I'm not putting you through a cross-examination," he went on, "to see how your brain clicks. I've a reason for my question. Will you answer it?"

"Well—I've read a few books. I have even had the pleasure of dining with M. Voltaire and taking a dish of tea with that Swiss watchmaker's son, M. Rousseau. Did I say pleasure? Hardly. I found them both quite insufferable prigs, supercilious and ill-mannered."

"So, doubtless, were some of the Prophets—and some of the Saints. The outer shell does not matter. I want to know: do you approve of what Voltaire and Rousseau write and preach?"

"They write and preach so many things."

"Yet, straight through, with always one and the same end in view. Know what it is?"

"Freedom?"

"Yes—freedom!" echoed the Viceroy; and his face, with the candle-light cutting across it as clean as with a knife, suddenly lost its vulturine craftiness; it looked dark and tense, as if carved out of waxed, close-grained old wood. Almost Gothic it seemed—Gothic its expression, half impassive and half exalted.

HE was, thought Duncan, different; no longer the intriguing courtier, vulpine and self-seeking and cynical. But fanatical, dangerously fanatical in his idealism. . . . And Duncan gave a little shudder.

"Freedom!" the other repeated, crashing a fist down on the table so that the glasses and plates rattled. "Freedom for all those who have been robbed and cheated and beaten and enslaved! The freedom of which Our Lord Jesus spoke! And for which He died on the Hill of Dolors!"

Duncan felt embarrassed at the man's terrible sincerity. He agreed with him, but was too much the Scot to carry his religion on his sleeve.

He did not reply; and the Viceroy went on:

"There are moments when soul must speak naked to soul. My own soul has shed its veil. What about yours?"

Duncan was embarrassed, as before; he did not know what to say.

"Are you merely the soldier, the rollicking adventurer? Or is there also your generous, high-spirited youth that would fight and maybe die for others?"

"I,"—rather stiffly,—"*have fought in my time, nor feared death overmuch.*"

"I know, I know: for French King Louis."

"And for the Stuarts."

"A minor cause."

"Eh?"—indignantly. "*Minor?*"

"In the reckoning of true values. True values are in huts, not in palaces." The Golden Fleece about the Viceroy's neck seemed to mock at his words. "In ragged clothes, not in velvet and ermine. True values are where people are poor and miserable and persecuted. Here in Peru they are." He paused. His dark eyes smoldered in his parchment face. "Would you fight for these same values, here in Peru?"

"It is not my own land."

"All lands are God's lands."

There was a silence.

"Let me tell you about Peru," the Viceroy went on, and his voice, curiously high-pitched, was immensely tragic. "The Empire of the Sun, the Incas called it. The Empire of Darkness, it should be called today: dark with injustice, with cruel sufferings and bloody martyrdom. Let me tell you about it! Ah,"—with a wry smile—"let that part of me tell which is not a Spanish Duke!"

He spoke of it, of Peru's past and present and future. A golden and wonderful dream-future he spread before the Scot; the latter was carried away by the man's eloquence, by his

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plans that blended guile with utter recklessness.

"Are you with me?" the Duke demanded as he finished.

Duncan did not reply at once.

He reflected that here—by the Lord!—was a perilous task, yet a task that was decent and fine and glorious. Here were high, valorous deeds to be done, deeds that would help him to forget Dolores.

He made up his mind.

"I am with you, sir," he said.

"In spite of the woman?"

"What woman?"

"The one,"—bluntly,—"*whom you love. You know, if you travel my road, you may never see her again.*"

"She is no longer in my life."

"And," came the shrewd query, "*is that one of the reasons why you're willing to take a fling at the far, far moon? Well—one of the reasons, less selfish than yours, why I'm taking this same fling is because of a woman who though dead is still in my life and always will be. Not wife nor mistress, since I've never had either, but a woman against whom I have sinned*

terribly; a woman whom—may God have mercy on me—I denied for the sake of pride."

He sat there, staring into the distance, into the dim past. Then he said:

"We shall speak of it again, and no later than tomorrow; for with the Prince here, time is pressing. And with him fishing in muddied waters, it might be the course of wisdom to muddy it still more."

When Duncan left, he was excited, elated. Here was a decent task, a fine and splendid task! And soon it would be once more a soldier's life for him: trumpets and drums and men riding briskly to strife!

He crossed the palace grounds—this little man with the long sword and the long courage—swaggering along as to the skirl of the bagpipes.

It was late; the moon was behind the clouds. But through the darkness he saw a gleam of light that came from the chapel, its great rose-window bursting a comet of jeweled colors—ruby and topaz and emerald and amethyst—into the night. The window was like an eye that stared at him; it seemed to draw him on.

He neared the chapel; the door was open. Should he go in?

No, no! Wasn't he a Scot who had sucked in the Shorter Catechism with his mother's milk?

But no harm in taking a look. . . .

He stopped on the threshold. The church was empty but for a single figure, the figure of a woman, tiny and slim, who was walking slowly along the side of the building, occasionally stopping and kneeling.

Duncan knew what she was doing, he had seen the like in France—the soldiers of his regiment, devout Normans, who before battle would travel the Stations of the Way of the Cross.

AND, all at once, he remembered what Manuela had told him, understood the illusion she had made. He knew who it was: Dolores, who came here day after day! Yes—as she approached the altar, a tall candle illuminated her sweet white profile. Dolores—praying. Perhaps for him?

And he too was about to pray, about to drop on his knees, there on the threshold of the church. Then, suddenly he turned; his hand automatically reached for the hilt of his sword as the shadows all about him spewed forth men—as, a second later, a torch flared high and ruddy, and he saw Prince de Cazenave-Cavalli, surrounded by his bravos.

"At him!" cried the Prince, urging them on as if they had been a pack of hunting-dogs. "At him—and cut him down!"

And they rushed forward, a dozen of them, with naked, flashing blades.

BUT NEVER

STANDING between Tony and Big John, the little man anxiously regarded his commanding officer. That they were innocent of any recent wrong-doing, he was certain. An unusual circumstance, in itself disturbing, without this summons to the Orderly Room at six o'clock in the evening!

The Colonel glanced at Tony's broad bulk, then shut his eyes. He opened them, looked up at Big John's six-foot-four-inch height, then shuddered. "Delicacy," he mumbled, "tact, diplomacy! . . . Sullivan," he said to the little man. "I'm ruined."

Sergeant Sullivan stirred uneasily. "I don't understand, sir," he said.

"This afternoon," the Colonel explained, "the commanding general requested that I designate three non-commissioned officers for a special assignment. Did I ask the nature of this assignment?" the Colonel demanded. "Did I say 'Sir, is it your wish that the less savory night-clubs be eliminated? Do you desire a bar pulled down, or perhaps an arm or leg torn off?' No!" the Colonel thundered. "I said, 'Of course, sir. There's Sergeant Sullivan, and Corporals Ross and Milano.'"

The little man winced. Big John gulped, and a dull flush spread over Tony's cheeks.

"But the assignment, sir?" the little man questioned.

"Twenty-six years' honorable service," the Colonel groaned. "Two citations. And now—" He fixed the little man with a fierce blue eye. "Report to G-2, room 814 Broadway Building," he said, "eight o'clock this evening."

G-2, the little man thought. Military Intelligence! Excitement smothered his indignation at the Colonel's attitude. "You can depend on us, sir," he said.

The Colonel covered his face with both hands. "I know that," he said. "And what I can depend on you for, will probably retire me. Get out!"

Closing the door behind him, the little man snapped, "Let's go."

They crossed the Infantry area, and swung past the hospital, Tony and Big John in the lead.

"So now we're snoopers," Tony grunted.

"Yah," Big John said, "but that aint nothing for the Old Man to be beating his gums about, Sully."

"I thought the Colonel made himself very clear," the little man said. Reluctantly he admitted a certain

justification for his commanding officer's attitude. It was true that they were noted for many things, among which discretion was conspicuously absent. But had they ever bungled a military assignment?

"Aw, the Old Man's just afraid G-2'll keep us permanent," Big John said. "They get a load of me dishing up the old charm to some of these female noses, and we'll be G-2 from now on, Sully. I always wanted to be a nose. I got the talent for it."

"You got the feet for it too," Tony growled.

"Sully," Big John remonstrated, "you should tell Tony that jealousy aint becoming to him."

"Skip it," Sully ordered. "We have a job to do. Whatever it is, we'll do it in a manner that will make the

Colonel regret his unkind allusions." He looked at them, with confidence.

What if they had been forced now and then to impress other organizations with the courtesy due a dough-boy? Surely the Colonel could distinguish between the business of the Army, and social activity. "We'll show the Old Man a real job," he said. "From here on, we'll think only in terms of delicacy, tact and diplomacy." With grim resolve, he increased his pace, noticing for the first time that they were in the Wac area.

"You better start thinking in 'em right away, Sully," Tony warned. "I just remembered that we forgot something."

The visible evidence of what they'd forgotten emerged from a building to their right.

Staring at the diminutive figure of First Leader Dillon, Sully cursed softly. There being absolutely nothing he could do about it; no point remained in kicking himself for failure to remember their date with Kay Dillon. And G-2 assignments were something you explained about only after they were over.

"Hi, fellows!" she greeted: "you're early."

Sully watched the freckles dance as her nose crinkled in a smile. Evading the gray-green eyes, he looked at the red hair curling out from under her cap. "Kay," he said, "I'm terribly sorry, but we can't make it tonight."

"Oh, that's too bad, Sully. What happened? Catch a guard?"

"No," he stalled. "We ran into something rather—er—special."

THE gray-green eyes narrowed slightly. "Then you are going to town?" she asked.

"Yes," he acknowledged. "But we can't—or that is, we—"

"Where?" she demanded.

"Well, you see, Kay—" Tony cut in.

"Where?" she insisted.

"Where there aint no place for a little doll like you, Kay," Big John placated. "In fact, dames are strictly out, aint they, Sully? Well, aint they?" Big John finished weakly.

"Is this something new in stand-ups?" she flared. "Or have you gentlemen suddenly discovered that nice girls don't frequent the places you've been taking me?"

"Please, Kay," Sully said, attributing the pounding in his chest to embarrassment. "this really is something special. We'll tell you when we can."



UNKIND

by Phil Magee

WHEREIN THREE
NON-COMS ARE DE-
TAILED FOR A G-2
JOB AND HANDLE
IT AFTER THEIR
OWN PECULIAR
FASHION.



Tony's hand smacked a blow that brought gasps from startled onlookers.

"And in the meantime," she said, "I suppose I can just wash my hair, and curl up with a good book. Well, it might interest you gravel-kickers to know that I'm not entirely dependent on you. Good night!"

Her heels clicked on the sidewalk in tones of dreadful finality.

The little man sighed. The only woman in the world who appreciated Tony's short right, or the niceties of Big John's Sunday punch. "This assignment had better be good," he barked. "Let's go."

They huddled in the rear of the bus, Sully pondering the futility of according equal status to a woman.

"I didn't think Kay'd do that to us," Big John said.

"What'd you expect?" Tony growled. "She spends half her time washing the gore off us, and now we make out like there's places we can't take her."

"Skip it," Sully said wearily, despite his complete agreement with Tony's statement.

Kay's implication and the Colonel's lack of faith weighing heavily upon them, they finished the long ride in silence. But swinging off the bus at the Plaza, the excitement of what lay ahead was evident in their stride.

Turning up Broadway, they walked the few remaining blocks, stepping

high and eager for the job. "This is it," Sully said. "And whatever they want, we'll do it by the numbers."

The elevator whirled to the eighth floor, its upward rush a promise of impending action. They stepped out into a softly carpeted corridor, leading past empty and darkened offices.

LIGHT shone through the glass door of a room at the end of the hall. Three abreast, they headed for room 814, the staccato beat of a typewriter growing more distinct as if heralding their approach. The typist banged the carriage in a flourishing finish.

"We're to report to G-2," Sully explained.

The typist yawned alarmingly. "Lieutenant Engebretson," she called over her shoulder.

Just what he had expected, Sully didn't know, but the gangling junior officer who emerged from the inner office was definitely not it.

"Yes?" the Lieutenant inquired, his voice high, his manner condescending.

"We're to report to G-2," Sully repeated, noting the sharply pressed pinks, and the small mustache.

"Oh, yes. Sergeant Sullivan, Corporal Ross, and Corporal Milano?"

The little man acknowledged their identity.

"Just the type," the Lieutenant said. "Just the type. The Major will be pleased, very pleased. You may be seated."

"Thank you, sir," Sully said. Looking closely at the Lieutenant's spindly figure, Sully revised a previously held opinion that ample girth was necessary to the proper support of pomposity.

"In the Army," the Lieutenant explained, "we have what we call echelons. A series of steps, with appropriate personnel functioning within their—er—capabilities, in each successive operation."

Tony coughed; Big John stiffened. Fingering his service stripes, Sully stared at the gold bar shining on the Lieutenant's collar.

"But G-2 does not confine itself to the utilization of personnel from the higher echelons only," the Lieutenant continued. He lowered his voice impressively. "We fit the material to the job at hand," he said.

Nice to know where they stood, the little man thought. "Interesting," he conceded acidly.

"I will be brief," the Lieutenant said. "Are you familiar with Lombardi's?"

"Yes sir," Sully said. "Very nice café. Less than a mile from the post. Only place to go when you have less than a four-hour pass."

"Exactly," the Lieutenant said slowly. "The only place to go when you have less than a four-hour pass. And who would have less than a four-hour pass?" he asked.

Sully shrugged. "Anybody whose outfit was pulling out," he said. "They'd be lucky to get an hour or two of fun."

THEN Sully realized: Lombardi's—the last place where there'd be clean tablecloths, and cold beer. The last time to shout and sing before entraining. And the last chance for the young and confident to talk too loud, and perhaps too much.

Forgotten now were the minor annoyances. The Lieutenant's lofty manner, the Colonel's attitude, even the breach with Kay, could not compete with this call to swift and positive action. The little man waited for the Lieutenant to continue.

The tale was short, and ugly: Rails torn up, switches tampered with. Men who told where they were going sometimes failed to get there. To trace the leak to Lombardi's had been simple. With only hours between final packing and entrainment, Lombardi's was the one place within reach, the one place where a careless word might mean disaster.

G-2 had not been idle. The identity of those who sought for information was known, also the way the information was transmitted.

"They're too clever to leave until the last soldier has departed," the Lieutenant said. "They signal their information. We have detected the signaling, but not the receiver."

To pick up the informers, he explained, would accomplish nothing: they'd be replaced. But to determine the receiver would put an end to this menace to military travel. A court case might be difficult to establish, but with the receiver known, his contacts could be easily hounded down, and his organization completely destroyed.

"Bound to be someone who diverts suspicion by avoiding any apparent interest in soldiers," Sully suggested.

"Really, Sergeant," the Lieutenant said, "this office has already consid-

ered the obvious. Your description would cover most of the people who patronize Lombardi's after the movies."

"And you want us to see what we can find out?" Sully asked eagerly.

"Nothing of the sort, Sergeant," the Lieutenant corrected. "Our plan is to offer these people information at a definite time, known in advance to our operatives. This information to be on a scale sufficiently tempting to create possible betrayal through excitement."



*Illustrated by
Frederic Anderson*

He put a hand in his pocket. "You will arrive promptly at eleven, representing yourselves as members of a large body of troops scheduled to pull out in the morning. You will talk loudly of your departure, omitting specific details. At exactly twelve o'clock you will carelessly divulge your routing, and the point of entrainment."

"Then somebody makes a false move, and we put the old arm on 'em!" Big John cut in.

"You will do exactly as you're told," the Lieutenant objected, "interfering in no way with our operatives. Do you need any money?"

"Not that bad," Tony mumbled.

"What was that?"

"Nothing, sir," Sully said. "We understand perfectly."

"Very good, Sergeant. In case you can't think of a routing, you might say, A.T.&S.F.; the Quantrell Team Track would do for an entrainment point."

"Thank you, sir," the little man said savagely.

They hit the dimmed-out street, the two big soldiers boiling over. "So we got echelons," Tony growled, "the six-weeks wizard!"

"Yah," Big John howled, "if guys like him'd just keep on peddling their vacuum-cleaners, and leave the war effort to—"

"Let us not be unkind," the little man interrupted.

"But Sully," Big John protested, "here we got the Old Man pounding the wailing wall, and Kay off us for life! And for what? So's we can stooge for this limited-service lilac?"

"If stooging will round up the rats who jeopardize troop movements,"

Sully said, "we'll stooge, and like it. After all, bright young men are a product of the times."

"I'm sorry, Sully," Big John offered.

"We'll catch a show," the little man said; "it's a long time until eleven." He linked arms with Tony and John.

IN the darkened theater he stirred restlessly. A chance to clip the deadliest of all saboteurs, and they were delegated as stooges! A court case? Let Tony or John hold a five-minute interview with their suspect, and there'd be a court-case! Stooges, he thought bitterly! Just the type, pink-pants had said! Well, at least the Old Man'd have nothing to worry about, and maybe they could square themselves with Kay, in time.

He sat in fuming impatience while love's young dream dragged to its inevitable conclusion on the screen before him. "Let's go," he said then.

Thirty-five minutes later they dismounted from a bus, across the road from Lombardi's. Double doors at left center of the single-storied building provided both entrance and exit.

"We haven't much to do," Sully said. "But we'll do it as well as we can."

Passing the cashier's desk, they turned right, threading their way past tables already well occupied. They took places at the far end of the room. From habit, Sully carefully studied the simple floor-plan. From where they sat, he could see the length and breadth of the room. To his right, abutting the kitchen, was a small alcove now untenanted.

HE looked from table to table. Army uniforms were sprinkled through the crowd. A party of sailors sat close by. But the preponderance of civilians surprised the little man. Sharp doubt as to the efficacy of G-2's plan assailed him. Detecting an overt act in a crowd like this would be a matter of chance alone.

"They can't all be saboteurs," he murmured. "Or G-2 operatives either." Quickly he decided on their own action. Selection! They'd talk loud, but in a way that would discourage the idly curious. The way they felt, an appearance of surliness would be easy. One glance at Tony and Big John eliminated the need for instruction.

"Give out," the little man ordered.

Big John gave, and Sully's troubles were momentarily forgotten in sheer admiration for the big one's effort. Tony added his deep boom to John's indictment of the high command. Troop movements at four o'clock in the morning! A fine thing. Stormily they twisted the towel, while Sully observed the effect.

A smartly dressed woman powdered her nose in the mirror of a weighing machine. First blood, the little man thought, conscious of her regard.

She stepped down from the machine, and came toward them with the easy stride of the very sure. They rose at her approach.

"Your last evening in San Diego?" she inquired.

Sully nodded agreement. He noted the smartly tailored gown, the still firm neck. Fortyish, he hazarded.

"There's so little we can do for you boys," she said. "Won't you join us for a while?"

"Us?" the little man asked.

"My husband and me," she smiled.

Two tables away, a man rose to his feet. A heavy-shouldered man, dressed in blue, and in appearance a proper consort for this woman. Catching Sully's eye, his face broke into a smile.

"We'll compromise," Sully said quickly; "suppose you join us?"

Pulling out chairs for them, Sully pondered the deceptiveness of physical appearance. Man and wife, and what anyone would call a nice-looking couple. And yet—

"Know where you're going?" the man asked.

"Yah," Big John said. "And when. Thousands of guys dragged outa the hay in the middle of the night. And why? 'Cause it wouldn't be us, if we didn't do it the hard way."

"You talk too much, soldier," a soft voice cautioned.

A slender man in a gray suit stood by their table.

"You bucking for 4-F, Mister?" Tony asked. "Or would a small kick in the teeth take care of you?"



"Quiet," Sully warned. "Tony is taking your arm into that alcove."

"Skip it, Tony," Sully said, his eyes on the stranger's sharp features. This would be the G-2 man, all right. Couldn't even trust us to do our own beefing. "Don't let us keep you," he murmured.

"Sorry," the slender man said affably. "But you were talking rather loud, and in these days—" He shrugged. "I'm Hal Smith," he grinned. "Can I buy you all a beer?"

The woman laughed merrily, her husband joining in her merriment. Sully nodded, and Tony made room for Smith. The little man nodded again, and Big John resumed his plaint, in a manner that appeared to delight their guests.

Unable to determine whether their gayercy was real or assumed, Sully turned away. He glanced at his watch: eleven-forty. The crowd had thinned considerably, but at four separate tables men sat alone, any one of whom might be the man they sought.

Sure that G-2's plan had not contemplated so wide a field, Sully looked from face to face. Suppose their man got away? Angriily he brushed the thought aside. Still, there must be a surer way. The man near the door, now—

To the accompaniment of Tony's sharp cough, and a decided fall in Big John's vocal effort, the little man's heart rhumba'd wildly.

Kay Dillon stood in the doorway, a tall soldier at her side. Her eyes met Sully's, but with no hint of recognition. Miserably he watched her escort guide her to a table. How would their mysterious mission look to her? Success alone would make suitable peace offering now.

Sully looked at Big John, and the big one's voice soared again, the song the same, but the music new.

The sailors rose to leave, one of their number remarking pointedly on the prevalence of loud-mouths in the Army.

Tony stood up. "The Old Man weeps over us," he said. "A pair of pink pants tells us about the Army. Our girl comes in with a Hostess House cowboy. We are calm guys; we say nothing. But do we have to take lip from flatfeet?" he demanded.

"Skip it," Sully said. "You don't even know which one of them made that crack. And besides, we're leaving in a few minutes."

"It won't take a minute, Sully," Big John cut in eagerly. "If we take a belt at all of 'em, we're bound to get the right guy."

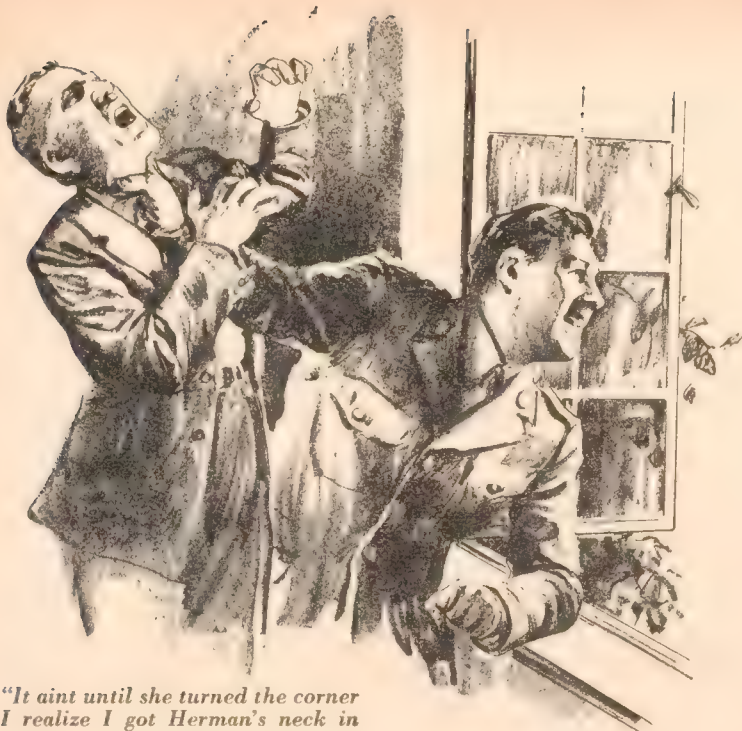
"Hold it," the little man said softly. Take a belt at all of them! He thanked his Maker for a destiny that had cast his lot with men like these, men of judgment and resource. Take a belt at all of them! And it wouldn't be hard to narrow the field, either. Only those with very urgent business would risk the thought of being present when John and Tony offered battle.

"It's quite all right," he assured their guests. "The boys are a bit on edge. You know, leaving, and all that." He smiled at the anxiety in their faces. After all, what did he really know about them? "A friend of ours just came in," he said pleasantly. "We'd like to speak to her, but we'll be back."

WITH that Sully moved toward Kay's table, Tony and Big John hurrying after him.

"We're all through stooging," the little man said. "Wipe it off," he warned, as a grin spread over Tony's face. "If I'm wrong, we'll get the bridal suite at Leavenworth." Quickly but carefully he outlined his plan.

Big John beamed. "And I get to smack Tony?" he asked.



*"It aint until she turned the corner
I realize I got Herman's neck in
my waving hand."*

Sully shook his head. "We want a real holler job, John, and no one can touch you at that."

"I never have any fun," the big one complained.

"Let's go," the little man whispered.

Tony's voice rose in hoarse denunciation of Big John's manners, speech, and appearance. Big John replied with violent eloquence.

TONY'S open hand smacked across John's face in a blow that brought gasps from startled onlookers. "I'll give you five minutes," Tony boomed. "If you're still here then, I'll thread you through the furniture." Whirling on his heel, he strode back to their table.

"Tony!" Kay called sharply.

Big John's howl exceeded Sully's hopes. Stormily John informed one and all that only the highest sense of public duty restrained him. In humble deference to those who'd rather not have two hundred and thirty pounds of soldier in their laps, he'd endure the five-minute wait.

Sully stepped to Kay's table.

"I could believe anything of you three," she charged. "But not that you'd fight among yourselves."

"Kay," the little man said, "whatever you're thinking, you're wrong."

The gray-green eyes widened. "I'd rather not discuss it," she faltered.

"You haven't any choice," Sully said. "This is Army business. And we need you, now."

"You're annoying the lady, Sullivan," her escort stated.

"When I have time," Sully said, "I'll transfer that annoyance to you. —Kay, there's a woman at my table. When I raise my right arm, bring her to that alcove in the corner."

Big John's efforts were rapidly emptying the café.

Joining Tony, the little man looked down at his guests.

The woman motioned in Big John's direction. "It's such a shame," she said. "Isn't there something we could do?"

"We'll patch it up on the way in," Sully said lightly.

"Must you go now?"

"Yes." The little man yawned. "It's twelve o'clock. Four hours from now, we'll be boarding the A.T.&S.F. out at the Quantrell Team Track. . . . I shouldn't have said that," he added quickly.

The man in blue appeared not to be listening. Rising, his wife walked to the weighing machine. "Excuse me," the slender chap said. "I need some cigars."

Sully waited while the woman mounted the machine, noting that she made motions with a lip-stick.

The man who called himself Hal Smith was almost at the cashier's desk.

The little man signaled to Kay. "Okay, Tony," he said softly.

Moving easily, Tony seized a blue-clad arm in one hand. In a single motion he brought it behind and up

the owner's back. The man's mouth opened, his face red with pain.

"Quiet, now," Sully warned. "Tony is taking your arm into that alcove. If you're nice, he'll let you go along with it."

The man made gurgling noises.

"You'll get to talk," Sully assured him. Again the little man's heart indulged in extra-curricular activity, but with less violence than before.

Her hammerlock as neatly executed as Tony's, Kay Dillon pushed the woman into the alcove.

"Would you like to talk?" Sully inquired pleasantly. "Or would you rather see your boy friend's teeth rolling around the floor?"

"You idiot," the woman flared. "That's Major Kirby, G-2!"

The little man swallowed painfully. At least, this would make things easier for Kay and this woman. "I hope you can prove that, sir," he said, nodding to Tony.

RETAINING his grip, Tony relieved the pressure on the Major's arm. Kay followed his example.

"Prove it!" the Major sputtered. "I'll have your hide for this. Tell this gorilla to let go of me!"

"It wouldn't be smart, sir," Sully said. "Not for a minute or two."

"A minute or two," the Major stormed. "Do you realize what you're doing? A dangerous saboteur may be escaping."

"Oh, no sir," the little man disagreed. "He isn't going anywhere."

The sound of heavy bodies crashing against the furniture came from the dining-room.

The Major looked at Sully, and the little man was relieved to observe the change in his superior's expression.

"I'm beginning to understand," the Major said. "By faking a row, you reduced the crowd to those who couldn't leave. That you mistook us for the informers is unimportant. We can pick up that Smith fellow any time."

"He aint going anywhere either," Tony said. "Big John's got two hands."

"But you thought he was the G-2 man," the Major objected.

"We were working on the old doughboy plan," Sully said. "Smack em all, and you're bound to get the right man."

"An excellent plan, Sergeant," the Major agreed, "and quite an improvement on my own. Shall we go now?"

"Your lieutenant spoke of the difficulty in establishing a court-case."

The Major raised his brows.

"What you don't see, sir, won't keep you awake nights," he said.

Big John crowded into the alcove, a man clutched in each hand. "I don't like this guy," he complained,

shaking the lump form of their erstwhile guest. "But Herman, here, is my pal. —Aint yuh, Herman?"

The man he had identified as Herman licked the blood from his lips. "Please," he blubbered. "No more."

"Herman aint really had the best of it," Big John explained. "In fact, he is the victim of an accident. Smithy makes a break. I turn to grab him, and I'm looking out a window. There's a dame." Big John lowered his eyes with becoming modesty. "You know how dames are when they see me," he said. "She waves. I wave back. And Sully it aint until she turned the corner that I realize I got Herman's neck in my waving hand."

Kay giggled; the Major gasped.

"But Herman don't hold no hard feelings," Big John said. "He wants to sign the papers and drink the ink."

Herman mumbled incoherently. Big John's arms swung wide. "This guy's skull is harder than yours," he reminded. "Remember?"

"Please!" Herman wailed. "No more. I'll talk."

"Nice guy, Herman," Tony acknowledged.

"This is Major Kirby, John," Sully announced. "G-2."

"G-2!" Big John bellowed. "I thought Pink pants Percy was — Er, glad to meettha, sir," he said.

The Major bowed. "And I'm glad to meet all of you," he said. "Just how glad, I will try to express in my

letter of commendation to your commanding officer."

"Could you mention diplomacy, sir?" Sully suggested hopefully, "or perhaps tact and delicacy?"

"With pleasure, Sergeant," the Major said. "And I might mention those admirable qualities in other quarters also."

The little man turned to Kay. "What became of your boy-friend?"

She slipped an arm through his. "Suppose you guess," she challenged.

"Sergeant," Major Kirby observed, "would you care to comment on your reception in my office this evening?"

The little man grinned. "Oh, no sir," he said. "We're often brutal, but we're never unkind."

BLUE BOOK'S CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Edited by
Albert H. Morehead

THIS type of crossword puzzle employs clues of various types, mixed in with the definitions of the words. For example, anagrams: "Pieces of eight" defines *specie*, of

which word *pieces* is an anagram. Hidden words spell out the defined word as parts of other words: *Hide each plan* defines *idea*. The enigma type of definition plays on the

syllables in a word: "I put in ad for help" is *aid*, since "I" is put into "ad." Puns, backward spellings, and straight dictionary definitions are also used. (Solution on page 107.)

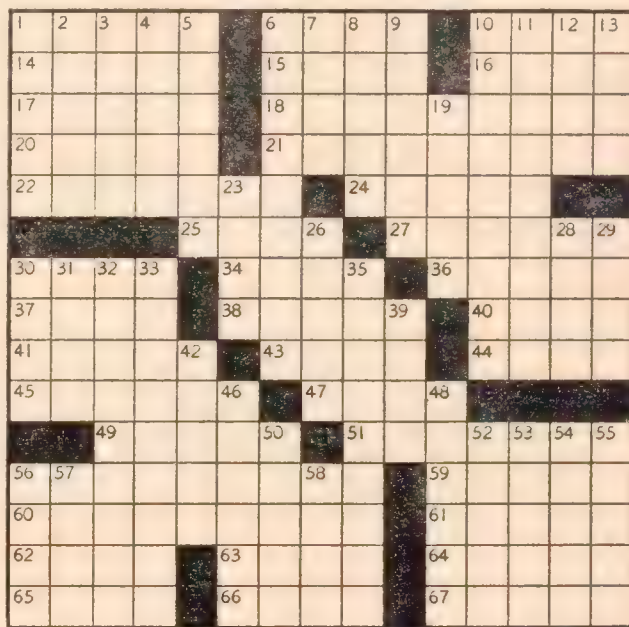
ACROSS

- 1 My first resembled a broker, my second has life, and my whole is in Congress
- 6 Empty around two-thirds of the ale
- 10 Can a river eel be invisible?
- 14 Lord of the manor
- 15 Beoo-tiful music
- 16 Equal a river
- 17 Ague's shaking; what's the treatment?
- 18 Avenges it, making up for all those denials
- 20 Termite loses it, by a number of feet
- 21 Provide for a late ending up its back
- 22 Girl serves tea after the card party
- 24 Fossilized fish are to be found in coal
- 25 Nothing less than rayon, in one form
- 27 Vies with the artist who depicts nativities
- 30 Challenge the Romans' wavering faith
- 34 Built a crate and flew it
- 36 Darn it! and this relative got incinerated
- 37 'Pon my word—confused as a pronoun by the vulgar
- 38 What I'd add: to wit, one tobacco box
- 40 Sort out the scraps
- 41 The German asks wildly for an illegal gain
- 43 Rested in the seat
- 44 Tidy up the desk—something's hidden underneath
- 45 Lances broken at Hastings
- 47 Forbid the potentate to take any number
- 49 Recalls what it is, etc.
- 51 Hiding under the piano I sometimes find unpleasant

- 56 Crepe tend to get mussed in such a pattern?
- 59 One sent to convey the hundred lost
- 60 Al interrupts the conquest of Germany and pits the continent against Japan
- 61 Coming back in the Spanish river, Spanish yet French
- 62 Japanese diet
- 63 Before you carry on the war get a guarantee
- 64 He gets honored for his contributions
- 65 A rank return? Definitely knot!
- 66 Garden tools require a change from head to foot
- 67 "Sir Patrick — with the Scots lords at his feet."

DOWN

- 1 A scrap with an unpleasant fellow
- 2 He drops fifty, "then he is sore confused"
- 3 Fatima is beheaded for trying to fiddle around
- 4 Stormed by the French guard
- 5 Lost eye, still had pronounced force
- 6 It's horrible to set the storm on us
- 7 Try a gambling investment and you'll need support
- 8 I clog up a system
- 9 A place for a drink you can arrange to tope at
- 10 Elation about the type of hair-pulling
- 11 Eire variously completes the hanging of a French collaborationist
- 12 Harte takes on like a Frenchman
- 13 Finally appease and pacify



- 19 The city will soon be ruined at this rate
- 23 Everyone found inchoate to be removed and reformed
- 26 O damn! He wanders from it
- 28 It takes an eon to make laws for a mythical hunter
- 29 Any street to home
- 30 Gods with feet . . .
- 31 River in Europe (but not the Po)
- 32 "—— de Rimini, niminy piminy." *Patience*
- 33 What should the striker infer about being licit?
- 35 The boss puts ten in nine (Down)
- 39 Brings up something on 'er; wants divorce
- 42 Food, once abundant, now a treat
- 46 Sacred in Lebanon
- 48 E. produces eyelids
- 50 Leah's in the Bible
- 52 Sneak about
- 53 The envoi is pretty sheepish
- 54 You'll find little sense in him, or in a Scotsman
- 55 They see back, involving the railway
- 56 Place for a Packard (but not for a Cad.)
- 57 Regrettin' the damage
- 58 Mention is made of the Met. and Martini



The Story of **POOCH** *and Sundry*

OCTOBER passed with flurries of wind and dried leaves. November came in and drew its length along, sometimes with sunshine, but often with dark skies. Of a night, a gale might whistle in from the sea; rains would drench the roads. Then again there would be bright, brisk mornings, with ice forming in the hollows and ditches; if you were out early, you'd see the smoke curling out of the chimneys. There was snow in November, too. Thanksgiving Day came and went. And then December showed itself.

It was a dreadful thing that happened on that December 7th, far away in the Pacific. Ships were sunk in the harbor; planes were wrecked on the ground; many people injured.

There were many of them young men, in the service of their country, in the Army and Navy, and in the Marines. And their relatives at home were very anxious about them. Then the details began to come in.

And one evening, just a little while after a telegram had been delivered to her, Mrs. Denny phoned to Eileen Clement.

"Word has come," she said. "Tom has been hurt."

"Badly?" gasped Eileen. She was so frightened she could not say more than that.

"They did not say," replied Mrs. Denny. "But there will be more news later."

A week passed before anything else was heard. Eileen went about with

a white face. She could not sleep. She'd sit at a window for hours during the night, and look toward the west. It was as though she'd expected intelligence of some kind. With every hour she'd feel more and more sure that Tom was dead.

"You must not do that," Mrs. Denny told her, when she heard of this. "You must not be frightened. You must not let your fears tell you things that are not so."

A few days before Christmas more news came, and bringing some relief. Tom was in the military hospital. He was being given the best of care. All those injured, who were fit to travel, were to be sent home. Soon!

"That means," said Mrs. Denny confidently, "that Tom is one of those.



other People, by John T. McIntyre

He is not badly hurt. We'll have him with us before spring comes again."

Eileen's heart was filled with gratitude; for some time she was like herself. But then fear came into her eyes once more—for she had heard a whisper. Men commissioned or enlisted in the service, if they were only slightly wounded, were not sent home. They were made fit by the Navy or Army doctors, and in the service hospitals—and when ready were returned to their duty.

"If Tom is sent back," said Eileen to her father, "that may mean he is injured in some permanent way."

"You can't be sure of that," said Judge Clement. "It may be, merely, that he's not prospering in that climate."

It was about mid-January when they heard he was on his way. Then Mrs. Denny left for the West Coast Eileen wanted to accompany her, but Tom's mother said no.

"Wait patiently" said Mrs. Denny. "It will be better in every way if you stay here. I will telegraph you as soon as there is any news."

IN a few weeks word came that the ship was in. Tom was resting. As soon as he could manage it, Eileen would receive a letter from him. Then the letter came. The words as set down had a strange look; it was Tom's writing, the girl knew that, but it was oddly changed. He said he was quite well in a general way. He'd be starting home in a few weeks.

A very brief letter, and one that left Eileen quite anxious. After that there was no news that the people of the town heard. But one morning, quite early, Judge Clement and Eileen were seen on the south road, driving toward the city.

"They're going to the airport," Michael said to Mrs. Filbert, confidentially. "I called up the office, and they told me there was a plane due from the West at ten o'clock."

About two in the afternoon, Henry's business truck stopped at the dogshop; and Jimmy, who was driving it, beckoned to Michael to come out.

"Listen," Jimmy said, "and keep it to yourself. On my way in, I passed Denny's. And I saw the Clements' car pull in there. I saw the Judge



help Mrs. Denny out. And then I saw Eileen help Tom out. And she led him up the walk toward the house."

"Is he lame or something?" asked Michael anxiously.

"I hope I'm wrong," said Jimmy; "but Michael, I think he's blind."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

IT was true! Tom Denny was blind. The whole town knew it before nightfall; people gathered in little knots and talked in voices that were hushed and filled with pity. Tom had always been so good-natured, had such a free spirit and ready smile. He'd been the first in the township to put on a uniform and go off to where the line was forming. And now, in a few short months, he'd been sent back—like this.

That night, before Michael went to bed, he noticed that Pooch was missing. He went out on the back porch and whistled for him, but with no result. To make quite sure, he went to the overturned barrel in the side yard where the pup slept. But he wasn't there.

"He's at Dennys'," Michael said to Mrs. Filbert. "He's found out Tom's come home; and I'll bet he headed for there the first thing."

Some time next day Mrs. Denny called the shop, and said Pooch was at their place.

"And I want to ask you," she said to Mrs. Filbert, "if you'd mind if we kept him here for a few days."

"Oh, no, no," Mrs. Filbert said. "Just as long as you like. Only, when you're tired of him, send him home."

"Tom was so pleased when he came barking at the door," said Mrs. Denny. "And Pooch was so glad to see Tom. I didn't think I had any tears left," said Mrs. Denny; "but I did cry a little as I saw them together. A very little, and quietly."

For some days Pooch was absent; then one morning he appeared with wagging tail and a doggy smile. He went to Mr. Filbert and then to Michael, and they both greeted him with pats and cheerful words. Then he hurried off to the house to show himself to Mrs. Filbert.

"He's really a dog with character," said Mr. Filbert. "He seems to always know what to do, and just how to do it."

That night, however, the barrel was still without a tenant. Michael stood

beside it, his hands in his pockets, looking up at the cold February moon.

"He has got character," said the boy. "And he's got everything that goes with it. And I think, with him, that means a couple of things that all dogs don't have."

He heard Mrs. Filbert calling to him.

"Has he gone, Michael?" she asked.

"Yes; he's skipped out again."

"He's back at Dennys'," she said.

"He wants to be near Tom."

Michael crossed the yard.

"Do you think he understands anything?" he asked.

"Don't you?"

"Well, yes, I do. But then," said Michael, "I believe so many things about Pooch, I don't always mention them."

"Dogs know a lot about trouble," said Mrs. Filbert. "Much more than they know about anything else. And Pooch's gone there because he's their friend."

Eileen Clement wasn't seen for some time after Tom's homecoming. His blindness must have been a great shock to her; indeed, it was said she grieved so she needed a doctor's care. But by and by she seemed to recover; during the short winter days she'd drive about in her car; she'd take her father to the county seat. At least once a day she'd visit the Dennys, and now and then she'd be seen with Tom. But not often.

Then a whisper went around: their engagement had been broken. That, it was said, had been the cause of the girl's illness. She'd pleaded with Tom,

but he'd been firm. He was a blind man, he said. The doctors told him he'd always be so. And a girl as young and as beautiful as Eileen should not have a blind husband.

"Tom is quite right, my dear," said Mrs. Denny. "You have all life ahead of you, a life of usefulness and charm. You must not sacrifice yourself in such a way as this."

Eileen had clung to Tom and wept. His heart was shaken; he saw his own life, full of loneliness; they'd be blank years in which youth would leave him—long, long days when he'd sit alone. But he was resolved. No man afflicted as he was should marry, he said. And he would not.

But Eileen was as resolved as he. If Tom would not marry, then neither would she. And there would be no long days when he would sit alone. She'd always be quite near. All he would need do would be to speak her name, and she'd be beside him.

MICHAEL visited Tom to see if there were any errands he might undertake. A few times he drove him into the city to visit the doctors. Also, now and then they'd drive down to the sea, where they'd walk along the beach, bundled up in big coats and mufflers, and leaning against the wind. The surf poured in, a series of messengers from the stormy sea.

Pooch went with them on these vigorous journeys. He was now a grown dog; he'd spent a year in the world, and had gained much wisdom. Mrs. Filbert had made him a warm coat of blue flannel, edged with black braid; it buttoned about him snugly, and he swaggered along in it.

The wilderness of the beach in winter was a source of wonder to him: the silent loneliness of the dunes, the gray sky. The only living things to be seen were the great gulls.

But Pooch liked it. He fought against the buffeting winds; he skirted and climbed the dunes; he penetrated deep into the gray, leafless bush. He searched for and found the things he'd seen in the long bright days of summer, but now much changed, silent of all activity, and often covered by the drifting sand.

As they walked along, Tom would sometimes say:

"Where's the Pooch?"

"He's digging in the side of a dune over there," Michael would reply. Or it might be: "There were birds' nests in the bush on the edge of the meadows; he used to go look at them in the summer when we'd be here. Now he's surprised to find them empty."

"He's learning things," said Tom. "Or maybe he's learned them all by now. How old would you say he is?"

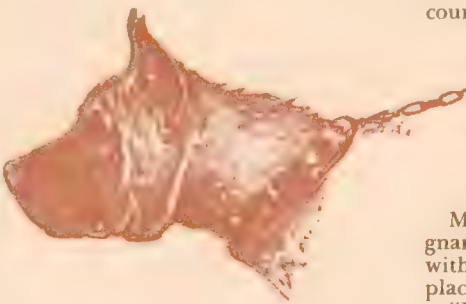
"Mr. Filbert says he thinks he's a year. And I think he must be, too."

"It might be a little more," said Tom. "But I wouldn't say. He looked to be three months old that day when we first saw him. That was April, and now it's February." Tom thought awhile and then he laughed. "How does he look, now that he's grown?"

"He's not very big; but he's got more shape than he had when he was a pup," said Michael. "And for a little tyke, he's strong."

"When I looked at him that day, I thought he was the most comic little chap I'd ever seen," said Tom. "With that black eye, and that friendly, trusting expression."

"He's still got that," said Michael. "I think he'll always have it. He's that kind of dog. And at the same time, he's got a deal of sense. He



knows things. He's got what you could call talent."

As he moved along the beach in the keen, bracing air, his hand on Tom's arm, Michael told the story of how Eileen's little spaniel Honey got into the drain; and how Pooch had been the means of getting her out.

Tom admired this recital. But when Michael gave him the details of the attempted kidnaping of the Fultons' little girl, he was quite excited.

"Why," he said, "the Pooch is a hero!"

"Jimmy Henry said when he saw him in the road after the men disappeared among the trees, he thought he'd quit—that he didn't know what to do and was just making a noise. But he *did* know," said Michael. "He was headed for your place to get help. Jimmy says your two Afghans heard him as he came running down the road, and they acted so excited he's sure they understood everything he was saying. And when he got outside the kennel and began to yell at them, they just went wild, and they went over the fence as if it wasn't anything at all."

Tom was silent for some time after this; they went along, Michael guiding him, and the cold green breakers came curling up on the sand toward them.

"Nothing should be wasted," Tom said at last. "The man who struck

Pooch that day and left him lying in the roadway did it without feeling. A mongrel more or less meant nothing to him. And yet the spark that lighted that pup's mind must have been a bright one. It had all the elements of loyalty, courage and friendship; and even then they must have been ready for growth and development. Because of that, and outside everything else, it would have been a criminal waste to have left that little beast to die. Because, Michael, he had something in him that was very close to being human."

Now and then of a morning Tom came to Mr. Filbert's shop. The chauffeur would bring him. He'd talk with them about dogs and birds—especially about dogs: their wisdom, their mysterious intuitions, their faithfulness; especially their fortitude and courage.

"The parachutist had made his way into the very center of the place. . . . But the dog D'Artagnan scented the intruder."

Michael told him about D'Artagnan, and how he'd been sent away with an American detachment to a place in England.

"If they ever give that boy a chance, he'll do something," Michael said. "He'd never be a play-dog, and I don't think he'd ever care for things the way Pooch does. But he's a dog that was born for war. The first time I saw him, I put that name on him because that's the way he looked. And as soon as Mr. Osgood saw him, he said he had the makings of a hero."

ONE morning it so chanced that Tom was in the shop when Michael came in from his regular trip to the post office. And he was quite excited.

"I knew it!" he said. "Just as soon as that big boy got a chance, they start pinning medals on him!"

"Who is getting medals?" asked Mr. Filbert.

"D'Artagnan," said Michael, who had taken up the telephone and called a number. "He's in the papers! Boy, if I'd only been there to see that!" A voice came to him over the wire. "Hello, is this Mr. Osgood?"

"Yes."

"This is Michael, at Mr. Filbert's dog-shop. Have you seen the papers?"

"No, Michael, I haven't."

"Well," said Michael, "you almost missed the big news of the day—about D'Artagnan."

"Has something happened to him?"

"Not to him: to someone else. He's in England—at a place where they make and store ammunition. A big

place. Listen to what the paper says: 'Some of the guards are American troops lately sent over there. During the night a German plane passed over and dropped a parachutist whose mission was to blow up the plant and the magazines. He had made his way, somehow, into the very center of the place, and was laying the contrivance that was to set off the explosion.

"'It is quite likely,' read Michael, 'that in a few minutes more the whole

*Illustrated by
Charles Chickering*

Pooch had come to know all Tom's favorite places: the creek where he liked to sit and listen to the water chuckling among the stones.

vast plant would have been a blazing ruin. But it so chanced that each American soldier at the time on guard had a specially trained dog as a companion. One of these, a magnificent beast whom the men call D'Artagnan, scented the intruder, and held him until members of the guard arrived.'

"Well, well!" said Mr. Osgood in high admiration. "Michael, it seems our fifty dollars was very well spent."

"So it was," agreed the boy. "There was never that much money put into anything that paid a bigger profit."

When Michael had put down the phone, Mr. Filbert said:

"Well, that seems to be another proof that we ought to have the right kind of work, doesn't it? D'Artagnan evidently fits perfectly into his job."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

NOW, things were not going too well for Tom Denny. Those who knew him best knew he was unhappy. And after his visits to the

doctors he was often silent for a long time. To one who had always been so active, it was difficult to be dependent upon others; and by and by he found himself doing little more than walking along the paths around the place. To be sure, Eileen continued to take him for drives. Now and then he visited at her home and talked with the Judge. Eileen, as she watched him, would often feel the tears in her eyes; and her heart would be full of grief.

"She's an unhappy girl," said Mrs. Filbert to Mrs. Havey.

"Well, to have your young man suddenly blinded, is a terrible thing," said Mrs. Havey. "It must be heart-breaking to her. If she does marry him, to have a blind husband is nothing to look forward to."

Mrs. Filbert lowered her voice.

"They'll never be married," she said. "He's still opposed to it. And I think the poor young man's right. She's a wonderful person," said Mrs. Filbert, "and such as she should be given their chance in the world."

"Maybe he's right, as you say," said Mrs. Havey. "But at the same time,



maybe it wouldn't be the same with them as it'd be with others. The Dennys are rich. And the Clements are not what you'd call poor. He'd not have to go out to make a living, you know."

"That's true. But he's looking at other things besides that. He's too kind-hearted, and thinks too much of her to tie her down beside him when he knows that all the rest of his life he'll have to go groping through the world."

There were other such conversations among the people of the town.

BUT then something happened—a thing altogether unexpected, and quite surprising. And as Michael knew more about the beginning of it than anyone else, and also had interesting ideas about it, we'll have him tell at least part of it.

"After Tom came back from the South Pacific," said Michael, "everybody felt sad. I know I did. No matter what I was doing, he came into it, somehow. I could see him standing up straight and smiling just the same as he'd always done: but with his eyes blinded. For a while I just dragged around the place. I know I never did anything right, and I know Mr. Filbert noticed it. But he didn't say anything—because he knew what the matter was.

"I don't know how Pooch ever knew Tom was back home. That's a mystery. But he did know it. The man who is the butler at Dennys' told me the pup was around there within an hour after they got back from the airport. Besides that, he said the two Afghans didn't seem to know about Tom being home. But just as soon as Pooch got there and started yipping and scratching at the door, they found it out. And they started to sound off too.

"Tom, inside the house, heard the noise, and asked what it was about. They told him about Pooch, and right away he said to let the old boy in. And I've heard that when he did get in, Pooch just rolled around on the floor in front of Tom and yelled. That's the way it is with young dogs; you think you've taught them some manners, but in what you call a crisis, they forget everything and go back to what they were at first.

"But nobody found any fault. Then they let the Afghans in, and I guess they made Pooch look kind of shabby; those fellahs have got pedigrees and real training, and know how to behave themselves.

"Just the same, though, Pooch was thought pretty well of. And after that he got so he was as much at Dennys' as he was at home; and Tom got to thinking more and more of him all the time.

"You know," said Michael, "I've got ideas about dogs. And especially I've got some ideas about Pooch. I know dogs are only dogs, and that they don't know about things the way people know about them—and that they don't think like people do. But just the same, they get to know things; they have a dog's understanding of them. If you give them time and don't interfere with them, they find out how to put things together. Do you know what I mean? They get so they can see two, or maybe three, things just as if they were one thing.

"If you just look at dogs," Michael said, "if you just pat them on the head and tell them they're nice fellahs, why, that's all you'll ever know about them. To get to really know about them, you've got to study them. That's what I do. Remember, I don't study them the same as I study a thing in a book. I just pay attention to what they do and when they do it, and I try to figure out why they do it. Some dogs aren't so easy to understand. The high-bred ones are that way. They don't show everything. They like what you call privacy in some things.

"But a pup like Pooch is an open book. He don't have any secrets from anybody. He just tells and tells. And that's what I mean when I say I especially know about him. I've taken care of him and watched him. There's a lot of things he does, and a lot of things he means, that maybe no one knows about but me.

"And that brings us back to what we were talking about in the first place—about what happened that day when I went with Tom and Pooch down there in the pine woods.

"Tom always liked the pines. He liked the way the trees smelled. He liked to walk among them and feel the spring of the pine needles, maybe six inches or so deep, under his feet. And now that mild weather was here, he thought he'd like to go down and put in an hour or two. I drove the car, and Pooch sat in the back seat.

"You have to go off the main road to go where we wanted to go. You take dirt roads, and narrow lanes very often; the going is heavy, but there's plenty to see. Now, since Tom lost his eyesight, I have always been careful not to say anything about it. I try, when I'm with him, to tell him about things he can't see, but not to let him know I'm telling it because of that. I make it like as if it was a kind of a conversation. 'Old Mrs. Edwards' lilacs always seem to be out sooner than anybody else's.' About like that. Just the same way I'd say it to somebody who could see. 'That colt on Nick Jeddy's place looks like a nice one. Nick says he's always wanted a colt that'd look as if it was fit to raise.' I'd talk that way.

"There were lots of things to tell about. There always is in the spring-time: Some of the trees in blossom; some others already in leaf. The birds building nests. Boys shouting to each other across pasture lots; girls picking lupins along the roadsides; all the fields green with the new things that are popping up out of the ground. I'd say to Tom:

"Don't the lilacs smell fine! Listen to those thrushes over there in that maple tree. Boy, oh, boy, they must have been taking music lessons all winter.'

"But I'd never tell him about anything he'd have to see. What I wanted to do was keep him cheered up. Anyway, when we got to the place we wanted to go, I pulled the car up at a place where it'd be out of anyone's way; and we all got out. At this place most of the bush that grows among trees was cleared away; the trees weren't regular or anything, and they were pretty close together. So you had to be careful where you were heading.

"I got my arm under Tom's, and we started through the woods. We were talking about things: about how shrubs and other plants, and flowers and things, grew in the woods where they hadn't much sunlight; how some birds build nests in places where other kinds of birds wouldn't even look at. And how, when trees grew close together, they got very high and didn't have many branches.

AND while we were going along and talking like this, I noticed Pooch. He was walking with Tom, on the other side. And he kept close to him. Other times when he was in the woods he'd go sky-hootin' around, having fun. But this time he didn't. He didn't do anything but keep beside Tom.

"And," said Michael, "after a while I noticed something else. I'd trained Pooch, almost from the first, about how to walk with anybody. And after he got to know what I meant, he always did it. Not only that; he'd look up at you, as you and him went along, and he'd seem to be telling you he liked to walk that way. That it was the best way to do it. And while he'd keep alongside, he'd never get too close. He'd always put a couple feet between you and him.

"But now what do I see," said Michael, "but him not doing that any more. He's not keeping two feet away; he's not keeping one foot away. He kept crowding in. Once or twice Tom almost stumbled over him: I had to put the brakes on fast to keep it from happening.

"I says to him: 'Fellah, keep to one side. You've been to school. You know better than that.'

"He got farther away," said Michael. "But now and then he'd look at me like he did that day on the beach when I thought he was having fun chasing the birds, which I found afterward he wasn't doing."

"He went through this whole crowding-in business three or four times. And by and by Tom says:

"What's the matter with Pooch? He's not getting along very well today, is he?"

"It's because of the trees," I says. "They're pretty close together some places, and he wants to keep beside you."

"Good fellow!" says Tom. "He's a real buddy."

"Now, there were a good many spruce trees in that woods," said Michael, "and I got talking with Tom about the difference I saw in the bark of some of them. I don't know much about spruce trees, but Tom does; and he told me some things about them."

"Not thinking what I was doing, I let go his arm and went to look at a tree a couple of yards away. And when I turned round, I saw Tom hadn't stopped. He'd kept walking along, and right in front of him was a pine tree. He was just about to walk into it when Pooch pressed against him. Tom felt him there, and to keep from treading on him took a sidestep, and so missed the tree."

"We talked a lot that day," said Michael. "And we walked a lot, too. Tom had never told me about making glass before, but that day he did. It was very interesting. But even with that, I couldn't keep my mind off Pooch."

"From the time Tom had come back home, the dog had sensed there was something different about him. I knew that; and I suppose some others did. But now I'd found out he knew Tom was blind!

"I'd seen how he kept him from walking into that tree. And then I understood about him seeming to forget about his lessons that afternoon and getting underfoot so often. He was helping me take care of Tom. Every time he got close to him, it was to keep him from knocking against something."

MICHAEL didn't mention this to Tom just then. But he did a few days later. Joe Biglow, who carried on the shingle mill outside town, was in the dog-shop when the Dennys' car stopped at the curb. Mrs. Denny was driving it, and Tom sat beside her. Mr. Filbert went out to take Mrs. Denny's order for some packages of hard biscuit for the Afghans. And when Joe Biglow saw Tom, he went out also. Joe's voice was loud;

he was good-natured, but had a way of blundering into things which would have been better left unmentioned.

"Well, well," he said to Tom, "here you are! I never expected to see the day when you'd have some one else driving for you, Tom. Too bad, old boy."

Tom's voice was very low.

"We've got to take it as it comes, Joe," he said.

"Yes, I guess that's so," agreed Joe. "But just the same, it's hard luck. I see you on the street sometimes," he went on, "with somebody leading you. And whenever I do, I say to myself: 'Why don't Tom get one of those seeing-eye dogs?' If you had one," said Joe, "you'd be kind of independent. You could go out any time you'd want to, and not feel you're imposing on some one."

Afterward Mr. Filbert said to Michael:

"I do wish Joe Biglow wouldn't be so thoughtless. He's good-hearted and he means well, but he ought to be more careful. I could see Mrs. Denny was provoked; and Tom felt pretty down about it."

Michael had heard what Joe said. He thought it was inconsiderate; but at the same time he didn't let it worry him. For it gave him an idea. Next day he consulted Jimmy Henry.

"When Joe talks, it's like somebody blowing a horn," he said. "And I guess it did make Mrs. Denny and Tom feel kind of sad. But you know what he said about a seeing-eye dog was really something. A dog like that would be a big help. and Tom *would* be more independent, as Joe said."

"I hear dogs trained that way cost a lot of money," said Jimmy.

"Maybe so; but that wouldn't make much difference to the Dennys. Anyway, what I'm thinking about wouldn't cost anything."

"Have you got a dog in mind?"

"Yes, I have. I'm thinking of Pooch."

Jimmy Henry opened his eyes quite wide.

"Now, wait!" he said. "Pooch is a friend of mine, and I worked with him on one of his biggest jobs. But don't you think he's kind of young for a thing like this? And besides, he aint the right kind of breed."

"In the shop we've got him down for a year old," said Michael. "And I think that's about right. And a dog at a year old, if he's going to be sensible at all, will be that way then. And if you'll take a look back at things, you'll know Pooch had good sense when he was a lot younger than that."

"I do know," said Jimmy. "That pup must have been born with sense."

"And about the breed," said Michael. "He's not the kind of dog

they use in the places where they train them. But this is special work. And maybe breed won't count so much. Pooch likes Tom. He's always liked him. And Tom likes him." He then told Jimmy what had happened in the pine woods, and Jimmy marveled. "He likes Tom," said Michael. "He knows he can't see. And he's already got the idea of what ought to be done. Though, of course, he didn't do it the right way."

"He couldn't," said Jimmy. "He didn't have that harness on."

"Anyway," said Michael, "I'm going to look into the thing. Maybe it can be done."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THAT same afternoon Michael went to the little town library—founded, by the way, by Tom Denny's father some years before his death. Michael talked with Miss Moffet, the librarian, about books on seeing-eye dogs, and she said they had one. Miss Moffet had been a great help to Michael in his reading; and before buying a book, he always consulted her.

She brought the book, and as she gave it to him, she said:

"Have you something in your mind about Tom Denny, Michael?" He said he had. "Well," Miss Moffet said, "I asked Mrs. Denny sometime ago what she thought of one of those dogs, for Tom. And I don't think she liked it; she said the only thing she'd considered about Tom was getting his sight back."

"He's had all the good doctors," said Michael. "Last week when I drove him into the city, it was to be examined by one from Boston. But I've heard he said he couldn't do anything."

"They have all said that," said Miss Moffet. "The Government doctors who treated him have said he'll never see again. And others from all the great eye hospitals have said the same."

Michael felt depressed as he went home with the book under his arm. That Tom Denny, who was one of the finest persons he'd ever known, should be struck into darkness, with all his life ahead of him, was sad, indeed. And, Michael thought, with that as a condition that couldn't be helped, all the more reason for trying to do some small thing that might be of advantage.

And it *would* be a help if Tom had a dog. And if he did have one, Michael said to himself, why shouldn't it be Pooch? For Pooch wouldn't be a stranger to him. He wouldn't be a bought dog. He'd be a friend. He'd

be a dog that remembered when Tom carried him in from the street, all cut and bleeding; and remembering that, he'd stick to him and be his friend forever.

Michael read the book about the seeing-eye dogs. It was a very good book, and it told about some things he hadn't known. And he could see that the training the animals got for the purpose of leading blind persons through the streets was quite good.

"But," the boy said to Mr. Filbert, "they say you must have Belgian sheep-dogs. And that they must be females."

"They find the sheep-dog best in the long run, because there have been many generations of that breed who have had training of a kind a good deal like this present one," said Mr. Filbert. "It's in their blood to be watchful and to take care; it has, you might say, become an instinct with them. And, as the book tells you, the females are thought best because they are steadiest."

"I've seen dogs leading blind people," said Michael, "who were little shavers. And with no breeding at all."

"So you have," said Mr. Filbert. "And some of those little dogs have been among the best for that work. But, you see, they are individuals. Maybe you'd find only one like that in a hundred thousand; and people who train dogs for leading the blind couldn't carry on with that many chances against them."

"Well," said Michael, "I think Pooch is one in a hundred thousand."

"So do I," said Mr. Filbert. "I do, indeed. He's an astonishing dog."

And from that time on, Pooch found himself in strict training. To his surprise, his journeys about town were greatly shortened. Michael was asking things of him that were strange. Why was a kind of harness put around him with one end of a stick attached to it, right between his shoulders? And why was he asked to walk up and down with Michael holding the other end of the stick? And Michael wasn't like Michael: Up to this time, when you walked with him, or did almost any kind of a thing with him, it turned into some kind of a game; you jumped and bounced around; you hopped over things. But now it was not like that.

Chug made game of him. He sat at the top of the monkey-cage and chuckled.

"Ha-ha!" he'd say. "Look at the dog! Look at him run!"

But there was no running. Pooch went up and down quite carefully. Because there were things in the way. And strangely enough, Michael had put them there. And he had to walk around them. And another thing,

even more strange, was that Michael didn't lead him around them. He led Michael!

Pooch would look at the boy good-humoredly while this was going on. After all, he seemed to be thinking, it *must* be some kind of a game—though not as good as the others, for they had speed in them. But Pooch felt it would turn out all right in the end. For all the things Michael did, turned out to be fun of some kind.

BUT this one, he found, was slow doing it; and at last he understood it wasn't going to do it. So after that, he settled down and took more notice.

These things Michael put in the way: the idea was, you walked around them. That must be it. Everything that was in the way, you walked around. You didn't run or jump or bounce around them: you walked very quietly. Pooch knew this was what Michael wanted him to do, for every time he did it, Michael said something nice to him and gave him a little bit of sugar.

And another thing: when Jimmy Henry was going by with a wheelbarrow, you stopped. Pooch found that out soon. And Jimmy pushed the barrow across their path very often. He and Michael would talk, and then Jimmy would begin pushing the barrow.

It was annoying. But after a time Pooch found out something else: Before this, when Michael had him out on a leash and he tried to do something he shouldn't do, Michael held

him back. But now it was different. If he tried to cross in a hurry to get ahead of the barrow, Michael wouldn't check him. He'd go with him. And there they'd be, all in a tangle, in front of the barrow, with both Michael and Jimmy shaking their heads at him and showing him how wrong they thought he was.

So after a time, when Pooch saw the barrow coming, he'd stop. But now there was something else. Michael wouldn't stop; he'd go on. And there would be the tangle once more.

It was all very perplexing. But the pup found, after Michael had silently called his attention to it many times, that the stick fastened to his harness wasn't like a leash. If he held back against it, Michael stopped. The first time Pooch did this, both Michael and Jimmy Henry were much pleased with him. And after that when he saw the barrow coming, he'd brace himself and stop Michael until it went by. Then he'd go on, and Michael would follow.

"He's got it now," said Michael, after Pooch had done this a dozen or some times. "I'm going to try him in the street."

At the first intersection, Pooch showed some uncertainty. There was a car coming, and Michael moved as though to step into the street; but instantly Pooch braced himself, and Michael smiled as he felt the stick holding him back. Then, when Pooch saw the way was clear, they crossed.

"He's really got it!" said Michael to Mr. Filbert, after a day or two's practice on the street. "He keeps me on the sidewalk until the way is all clear, and then he takes me across just



as though he'd been doing it for years."

Mr. Filbert nodded.

"I felt sure he'd get the idea of it. But there is still a great deal to do. Very many more things to learn."

So there were. But Pooch, now that he was at school, so to speak, was very willing. He knew Michael was his friend, and he was anxious to do what the boy asked of him. Open places in the street? He learned to avoid them quite soon. Places where building or repairs were going on, where there were scaffoldings or ladders, were also to be kept clear of. Crowds of people, excitement, violence, sudden activity on the part of strangers, all came gradually under the heading of things that one must treat cautiously.

Of course, this part of Michael's teaching being done in public, the matter got attention on Main Street. He was asked questions, but he replied that he was experimenting. That he wanted to see how much a dog not of the accepted breed could be taught of the seeing-eye formula.

Eileen Clement spoke to him about it one day. And he told her what was in his mind.

"And," he said, "the next time I drive Tom down to the beach, I'm going to let him find out what the pup can do. And then if he likes the idea, Pooch'll have a steady job."

It was only a few days later when Tom telephoned the dog-shop. He was just wasting away, he said, for a breath of the ocean breeze. And could Michael have the afternoon off? Mr. Filbert was always agreeable to a call like this from Tom. So Michael, with the homemade seeing-eye equipment under his arm, started off for Denny's shortly after lunch, with Pooch frolicking on ahead of him.

When they came to Clements', Pooch stopped, sat down and looked at Michael inquiringly. Were they going in or not? He was a little dis-

appointed when Michael kept on, showing they were not; but in a few moments he had recovered and was going along as gayly as before.

At the Fulton place they saw Mrs. Fulton. She called to Pooch, and he joyfully tumbled through the break in the hedge and began barking and capering about on the lawn. Since the kidnaping episode, the Fultons had paid a great deal of attention to him; they fed him and petted him, and he played romping games with the little girl. Doctor Fulton's interest in him was great; that he had been a common pup, an ownerless stray, and yet showed all the indications of honesty and sturdy character, had fixed the Doctor's attention.

One day, quite some time before, as the pup was paying his regular visit, the Doctor noticed he'd shake his head and seemed bothered. A burr was found in his ear, and Dr. Fulton took it out with a pair of tweezers, much to Pooch's satisfaction. At another time he had a thorn in one of his feet; the Doctor also removed that. The dog-shop heard about these things, and noticed that the pup now took many of his small troubles to the Fultons.

"He seems not to think so much of home treatment any more," Michael said with a grin. "He'd rather have a professional work on him."

"Dogs get into habits—even more so than humans," said Mr. Filbert. "And I think the Doctor makes more of a baby of him than we do."

"He does. One day I stopped there with him and he was limping a little. Right away they noticed it. Mrs. Fulton got a bowl of hot water and bathed his foot, with the old bluffer sitting there trying to look as sick as possible. Once or twice I caught his eye, and I think, maybe, he winked at me."

Now Michael was driving Tom Denny along the fine, smooth road toward the sea.

"Summer is coming on," said Tom. "The air is loaded with wonderful smells."

"I think everything's going fine," said Michael. "It'll be a nice season. The magnolias are out, and a lot of other early flowers are showing themselves. Most all the birds are up from the South, have their nests built and have started housekeeping."

TOM talked of the springs and the summers when he was still at school. Of camping, on the beach and in the woods. Of a horseback journey he took with three other boys down into Maryland and Virginia. Another time a wagon trip through the Yellowstone country, with four harness-broken mustangs and a Pawnee guide, that filled the whole of one summer.

Michael had read of such things; he'd seen some of it in the movies. He liked the idea of the long roads through settled, fine country like Maryland and Virginia. The great, wide new places in the West, with their forests and tall, wild mountains, stirred him a good deal.

"It must have been pretty good to go on trips like that," he said. "Maybe some day I'll have the chance. But I don't know."

They put the car up at the fisherman's hotel, which had already opened for the season, and then started up the beach in the direction of the distant lighthouse.

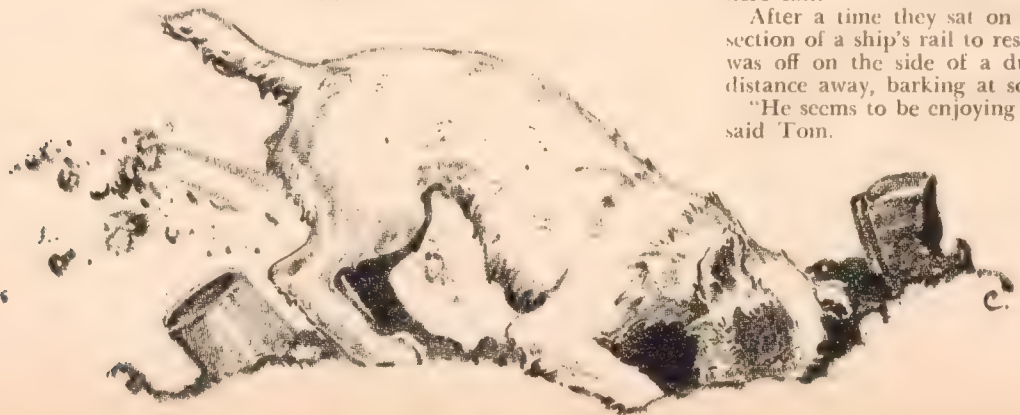
"The terns have come back," said Michael as he watched the white birds, searching, ever searching, for fish out beyond the breakers. "And the winter gulls have mostly gone."

The sandpipers were busy outside the high mark of the surf, and flocks of them skimmed along close down to the creaming waters. The dune grass was green and high and waved sturdily in the wind. There were broken timbers, empty casks, crates, and such things, littering the beach. The sharp turns Michael took to avoid these attracted Tom's attention, and he mentioned it.

"There's a lot of stuff all over the beach," said Michael. "There must have been a heavy storm since we were here last."

After a time they sat on a broken section of a ship's rail to rest. Pooch was off on the side of a dune some distance away, barking at something.

"He seems to be enjoying himself," said Tom.



"That young fellah knows how to do that," Michael replied. "He's a real joy-boy." There was a pause, and then Michael added: "But lately I've been teaching him some things. How to watch out if he's walking with anybody. How not to cross the street if there are cars coming."

But from this point to the end of that half-day on the beach, Michael had better tell what happened. His story of it is very much more direct than any one else could tell it.

"I whistled for Pooch," said Michael, "and he came a-running. And then I unwrapped the harness, put it on him and fastened the stick to it."

"He's got it in his mind pretty well," I said to Tom. "He don't have to be told or shown any more. He does it all himself."

"Tom asked me what I'd been teaching him, and I told him about the harness and the things I'd done in the pup's lessons. Then he felt the harness to get the idea of how it was fastened around Pooch; and he felt the stick and found out how it was fastened on."

"It's a good bit like the seeing-eye dog arrangement," he said, "—except the difference in the stick."

"I said there was a difference, and it was because I didn't have any wood that'd bend like that. But, I said, it worked very well."

"Tom seemed to be thinking about it for a while; and then he says to me:

"And so the Pooch has been in training, has he?"

"Yes, he has," I says. "And he's smart, too."

"And then Tom says the very thing I'd been hoping he'd say. He says: 'I think I'll try him.'"

"He got up and called Pooch. And he took hold of the stick and he says to the pup:

"Come on, old scout; let's take a little walk, you and I."

"And," said Michael, "when I heard that, I held my breath. I didn't know how the pup would act. He'd never walked in that harness with anyone but me, and I thought maybe he'd be puzzled, and would forget what to do. But it wasn't him that forgot: it was me. And what had got out of my mind was that Pooch knew that Tom was blind, and that he'd begun guiding him even before my first lesson started."

"And so," said Michael, "as soon as Tom said to go, he started—not fast, very careful. And as he started, he looked up at Tom, and honest, I know what he said in that look. He said: 'Don't worry. We're going to do fine, you and me!'"

"I sat there on that broken rail and watched them," said Michael. "And as they went on up the beach

with Tom holding the stick, and Pooch leading him, I says to myself: 'Now it's the dog's chance. One time Pooch was in trouble and Tom gave him a hand. Then the world turned round a few times: now Pooch finds Tom in trouble, and is helping him.'"

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

ONE morning about a week later, Mrs. Filbert was returning from Sam's Main Street Market. Michael saw her while she was still some distance down the street, and he went to meet her and relieve her of the heavy basket. He noticed that her eyes were red. And when they reached the dog-shop, Mr. Filbert also noticed it; and he spoke of it.

"Well," said Mrs. Filbert, "no wonder they are. Because as I was coming along, I saw Tom Denny and the pup."

"How'd they look?" asked Michael, much interested.

"I think how they were looking is what made me cry, Tom was so bright and smiling," said Mrs. Filbert, the tears showing again. "And so confident and pleased! And that little dog," said Mrs. Filbert, touching her eyes with her handkerchief, for the tears were now overflowing, "was so good and so attentive. He saw me, and he wagged his tail, I think twice. But that was all. He had to take care of Tom. 'Some other time,' he seemed to say, 'but not now. I have to watch and see that nothing happens.'"

"An astonishing dog," said Mr. Filbert, nodding his head. "Faithful and intelligent."

"Did he have on the new harness?" asked Michael. "I mean, the regular seeing-eye-dog kind?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Filbert. "And it was much easier for Tom. I think the pup managed better with it, too."

"So he would," agreed Michael. "The thing I had for him was only a makeshift."

"It is a pleasant thing to think the whole matter is going so well," said Mr. Filbert. He shook hands earnestly with Michael. "It was a nice thought," he said. "Very kind and helpful. Michael, I'm proud of you."

It was the very next day that Tom appeared with his guide, coming toward the dog-shop. It was their first visit there as a team, and Mr. Filbert called to Michael.

"The pup," said Mr. Filbert, who seemed quietly thrilled by the whole matter, "takes to the work like an old campaigner. And I really believe"—adjusting his glasses to get a better view—"that he walks with a kind of a strut."

"He's proud," said Michael. "He knows he's doing something, and it

makes him feel good. But"—reassuringly—"he'll never get to be a dog that'll let his head swell. He's too nice a fellah for that."

Chug was perched on the edge of the awning, looking up and down Main Street. He too saw Pooch; and the new harness seemed to amuse him greatly.

"Ho-ho-ho!" he shouted. "Ha-ha-ha! Look at the dog! What's the matter, fellah?"

It wasn't until Tom stood in the shade of the gayly striped awning that Pooch relaxed. He sat down, his tongue lolling and his eyes twinkling at Mr. Filbert and Michael.

"You're getting along, old topper," praised Michael, smiling at him. "A regular Belgian couldn't do any better than you."

"Not as well," said Tom. "Not nearly so friendly, I know."

"There are some things he's never had any training in," said Michael. "One of them is other dogs. You know, when a strange tyke comes along, Pooch has always been great for going over and getting to be pals with them."

"Eileen mentioned that," Tom said. "She watched him, and she tells me he never so much as looks at another dog while we are going along. During business hours he's strictly business."

As Pooch had been, from the first, a habitual visitor, he knew most of the shops along Main Street by their names.

"If I want to go to the stationer's," said Tom, "I say 'Stephens,' to him very plainly, and he takes me there as clean as a whistle. And it's the same with most other places."

BUT Tom didn't go to many places. Since blindness came upon him, he'd been reluctant to do so. Business calls he did not seem to mind; but since he'd come home from the East, there had been nothing of a social nature at the Dennys; they had visited nowhere except at the Clements'.

"I think," Mrs. Denny once said to Eileen, "it would be more cheerful for him if he didn't make such a reclusé of himself."

"It troubles him to be among people brought together merely for enjoyment," said Eileen. "When we drove out the first few times after he came home, I'd suggest we'd stop here or there; but he said he'd rather not. I especially wanted to visit the Fultons', telling how Georgia was a college friend. But he only shook his head. I think he feels it's a dreadful shock to people when they see him, a blind young man, for the first time."

"He does think that," said Mrs. Denny. "He's thought so much about it that he dreads it."



"Ha-ha-ha! Look at the dog!" chuckled Chug. "Yeah, look at him," Michael said. "Something worth about a hundred million dollars!"

"If he doesn't go out among people more, he'll suffer for it in the end," said Eileen. "He'll *actually* become a recluse, as you've said. Everyone except those he's accustomed to will become repellant to him."

"I think," said Mrs. Denny, "we'll bring him around after a while. He's young and has never had anything serious happen to him before. Though," she said, "I have noticed lately a thing that I've asked the Doctor about."

"What sort of thing?" asked Eileen.

"Well, he's not like himself in some ways," said Mrs. Denny. "His nerves are not good. And the Doctor said he'd probably not altogether recovered from the dreadful shock that caused his blindness."

"Yes, you've told me that," said Eileen. "But what more is there?"

"He doesn't seem to have the same resistance he once had. For one thing, he is forever catching cold."

"I haven't heard him complain of that," said Eileen.

"Haven't you ever noticed him put his hand up to his neck, as though he were in pain?"

"Oh, yes," said Eileen. "I've seen him do that. And I've spoken to him about it. But he doesn't seem to think anything of it."

"I suppose it's really nothing," said Mrs. Denny. "But it must bother him a good deal, for I often see him turning his head this way and that as though trying to get relief."

Michael, during their drives and walks together, had often seen Tom do this. And once he mentioned it.

"The Doctor says I keep taking cold," Tom said. "He says my nerves are a little shot. At the back of the neck there is a large nerve center, you know, and it seems to be my weak spot."

"Or it might be," said Michael, "that you've strained yourself somehow. Sometimes I make a sudden motion and pull a muscle. Maybe in my arm or in my shoulder, or back. I rub it out with liniment. If I can't

reach the place myself, I get Jim Henry to work on me. He's good at it."

Tom Denny was naturally buoyant and cheerful. People who had known him as a boy said he'd been that way then. But since that terrible dawn in the Pacific islands, when death rained from the sky, he'd had very little to be cheerful about. But he struggled against depression. Tom had always been a good fighter, and never let anything put him down if he could help it. But now, as the days passed, he'd sit on the porch or under a tree at the side of the house, silent for hours at a time. He didn't want to talk with anyone during these periods; his mother and Eileen came to realize that, and they'd leave him to himself.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

BUT there were times when Tom would rouse up and whistle for Pooch. The pup would come bounding up, barking, pleased and eager.

The harness would be attached to him, and away they'd go across the fields. Pooch had come to know all Tom's favorite places: the creek where the young man liked to sit and listen

to the water chuckling among the stones; along the edge of Plummer's apple orchard, where all the trees stood in rows, covered with blossoms and giving out the fresh odors of spring.

Then there was a place on the edge of a scrub pine tract and with some meadowland running away from it at one side. This meadow was the baseball field for the boys of the town, and Tom liked to sit at the timber's edge and listen as the game progressed. He'd laugh at the shouts; the sound of the bat meeting ball, the scampering, the lifting yells of victory, brought back memories of his own boyhood.

OFTEN they took a path that led to the back country, among people who struggled with little plots of poor ground, and who worked at odd jobs to help them win a living. He found a simple kindness among these simple, untaught ones; they'd heard about his misfortune, but no one ever mentioned it; and their admiration of the cleverness and faithfulness of Pooch was unbounded. The tow-haired ragged children would gather around in silent delight and watch the pup lead Tom here and there; and they'd laugh and nudge each other as he'd sit down and look at them in his good-humored way.

It was on one of these journeys undertaken by Tom and Pooch that the climax came of the thing we've spoken of. They had taken to the main road that day, for Tom had telephoned Eileen, and she was to join him.

Pooch was always pleased with any direction Tom might choose; but this way into town was easily his favorite. His main expectation was a visit to the dog-shop and a moment or two with Michael, a wag of the tail for Mr. Filbert, and a bark or so across the yard at Mrs. Filbert, who might be at one of the windows. Then, of course, there was the Clements'. A little visit there always delighted Pooch, for it was a place where a dog that tried to be a pretty good kind of a fellow was appreciated. The Judge talked to him; and Eileen was as kind and pleasant a person as one could meet anywhere.

"Pooch," Michael would say later on, in talking about that day, "always liked the dog-shop. He was raised there. And after being away sometimes for a week, he'd feel like going around among the cages to see what new dogs or pups, we'd got in. Or maybe kittens or birds. And he did like to stop at Eileen's."

"But I've always thought the place he wanted to visit most of all was the Fultons'. Because he liked the people there, and they liked him; and he hadn't been there for a long time.



"The reason for that was that Tom Denny had never known the Fultons, and so he'd never stopped there any time he passed. Tom was what you might call sensitive; and after he came back home blind, he never seemed to want to know any new people.

"That day he was coming along with Pooch; and when they turned the bend leading into town, Mrs. Fulton saw them. She was standing at the edge of the lawn, with her little girl and Angus, the Scotty.

"As soon as Pooch saw them, he began to bark. Tom told me afterward he was surprised, because the pup had never even so much as whimpered at any other time since he'd been leading him.

"Then Angus began to bark, answering back. And I'd bet anything," said Michael, "that's what Pooch wanted. I've told this to people before; they've listened to me, but they've smiled. And I could see they thought I was imagining things. But I know dogs pretty well, and I know Pooch very well. Things get into a dog's mind. I've said before that I know a dog's mind isn't like a person's; but just the same, when a couple of things get together in it, they often start cooking. And I've seen something like that happen with Pooch more than once.

"Do you remember," said Michael, "how I told you about Dr. Fulton doing little jobs for Pooch? Mending him up? And how the pup got so that when he had anything wrong, he'd go straight to the Fultons to get fixed up?

"Well, keep that in front of you: for now I'm coming to the place where people smile when I tell it to them. Pooch knew, right from the start, that Tom was blind. How he knew it, I don't know. But that day down in

the pines, when he and Tom were together, he proved it.

"And here's another thing: He knew Dr. Fulton was some one you could go to when anything was the matter with you. He knew something was the matter with Tom; and so, why didn't he go to Dr. Fulton and get fixed up too?

"I've talked to Tom about this. And he said that at first whenever he'd pass Fultons' with Pooch, the pup'd stop. At first Tom didn't know it was the Fulton place, but he got to know it later. A couple of times, he said, Pooch tried to lead him in at the gate; and he had to speak to him.

"But that morning when Pooch broke the rules by barking at another dog when he was out on the job, was the one when he got to do what he'd wanted to do. Mrs. Fulton spoke to Tom. And Tom spoke to her. And while they were talking, the Doctor came out.

"They all talked about Pooch; and all the time he sat there in the middle of them, and I'll bet you he knew he'd started something. He's a smart tyke, and you've got to be acquainted with him right well to know how smart he is.

"Then the Doctor asks Tom to come in. And he does. Then they get talking about the war. And Tom tells how he was on the destroyer that morning in the harbor, and how, when the alarm came, he ran up on deck. And then a bomb fell on the ship. A lot of the men went down, and he was one of them. When they picked him up, they thought he was dead. Then the ship's doctor said he wasn't; they brought him to. But afterward they found he was blind.

"He had nothing at all wrong with his eyes. They were still good eyes. But just the same, he couldn't see.

I HEARD Mrs. Fulton tell Eileen about that talk," said Michael. "She was there in the room with them. And she said that while Tom was telling about things, he'd lift his hand, she thought, to his collar. It seemed like as if something was wrong with it, and she asked him if she could fix it for him.

"But Tom told her it wasn't his collar. And then he mentioned that something had been hurting at the back of his neck ever since that time the bomb had exploded and he'd been knocked senseless.

"And that's how this whole business got started," said Michael. "By Pooch getting Tom Denny into Dr. Fulton's place, which he'd been trying to do for a couple of weeks. For as soon as the Doctor heard what Tom said, he started to investigate. I can't tell you what he found, the way he could tell it to you if he was here. But anyway,

it was just as all the eye-doctors said: that nothing at all was wrong with Tom's eyes. It was something else that had happened. It was what you call shell-shock.

"And Doctor Fulton found out what that shell-shock had done. I heard him say that there are nerves that go from your eyes back to the top of your spine where there is a thing called the axis. Your head turns on this axis, and some place right about there the eye-nerves are.

"Well, when that bomb exploded on Tom's ship, it knocked him flat. He was what you call unconscious. And the shock knocked some things out of place right where these eye nerves are. And the nerves were pinched in between. It's something like what happens when you shut off the current in a light. Nothing's broken, but there's no light. That's how it was with Tom's eyes; and when Dr. Fulton eased up the pressure on the nerves, they began to work again, and his eyes lit up. He could see!"

SIGHT did not return to Tom in a sudden burst. He saw dimly at first. *But he could see.* His mother and Eileen held him in their arms and wept when they came to the Fultons' in response to Mrs. Fulton's call.

The next day he saw better. In three or four days he saw as well as ever—except that he could not tell one color from another.

"In a little while," said the Doctor, "that will clear up. There has been no actual damage."

A few days later Mr. Filbert was talking with his wife at a rear window in the shop.

"His mother, when she stopped awhile ago, said his eyes are now perfect in every way," said Mr. Filbert. "Isn't it wonderful?"

"Eileen is so happy," said Mrs. Filbert. "I saw her on the street yesterday, and she just shone with it. I remember thinking that's the way all girls should look when their weddings are only two days away."

The trees were almost in full leaf in the yard; the sun was shining, and the birds in the open cages were trilling and whistling. Michael was painting some window-screens in the shadow of the garage. Pooch was at the far side of the yard, digging a hole in which he meant to hide a bone. Chug, perched on the rail of the back porch, saw him and shrieked:

"Ha-ha-ha! Look at the dog! Ho-ho-ho!"

Michael grinned as he stood with his brush in his hand.

"Yeah, look at him," he said. "And when you do, don't forget you're looking at something worth about a hundred million dollars!"

THE END

The Grand

FOR over a year now I've been on the wagon; and even though I have been in sort of a fog of bewilderment about how to get my girl back, you can imagine how startled I was to peer into the microscope and see this creature obviously making signals at me.

Now, the Army turned me down because of my eyes, but I knew I wasn't seeing things. Besides, I'm just nearsighted, which doesn't interfere with my laboratory work in the munitions plant, and actually helps me when it comes to using a microscope. So I knew the thing was there.

I was working overtime that night, and I was pretty tired, but I wasn't at the point of having hallucinations. Yet when this creature actually waved to me and cupped its hands around its mouth in an obvious effort to make me hear, I was flabbergasted.

I looked around the side of the microscope just to make sure the boys in the lab hadn't rigged up some sort of gag on me. But nothing was to be seen there—whatever the specimen might be, it obviously was too small to be apparent to the naked eye. So I went back to the eyepiece.

But now nothing was visible except the slide I already had under observation. No little creature bawling soundlessly at me. Vaguely I began to wonder about myself, yet with a certainty that my eyes had not deceived me. I was in that unhappy state where facts are facts yet one wonders whether anybody else goes by the same standards.

I was trying to concentrate, when the whispering came to me. It was very faint, and might have been the rustling of the leaves outside, except that words shouldered themselves into the soft sounds every now and then. I hunted for the source, and it seemed to be the amplifier.

The loud-speaker system for the whole plant is centered in the laboratory, so our horn usually is disconnected from the rest to prevent echoes. We keep a microphone hooked up to it for testing purposes, and the sound I heard might have been coming from this microphone, except that nothing was in sight near it.

I listened intently, but for a long time could hear nothing except the hiss of the Bunsen burner. Then the loud-speaker whispered again, like the last breath of an echo:

"Turn—full volume. Put me under microscope—"

I turned up the amplifier until it would have made the noise of a falling snowflake sound like the bombing of Berlin, and placed the mouthpiece right under the microscope, removing my whole slide-plate to have sufficient room. At first I saw nothing but the giant craters that normally were small holes in the mike, and I worked it slowly back and forth underneath until at last I caught a faint trace of movement. As I held it rigid, out of one of the craters popped the strange creature which first had interrupted me.

Obviously it was out of breath—and indignant—so I took time for a good long look. Close inspection showed that it had a human form, but with wings. I never had met an angel in a laboratory, even an indignant one, so I was not inclined to believe that particular precedent was being broken. But some precedent was breaking, and I didn't know what the score was. I waited until the thing got its breath.

"You—you kept moving—*puff, puff*—that microphone back and forth while I was racing across it to keep under the lens," shouted the creature with obvious effort, though the sound came over the loud-speaker only as a faint whisper. "Every time you moved it, I fell into another hole!"

"Sorry," I said, with surprising calm considering the fact that if anybody walked into the lab he would think I was talking to myself. "But what is this all about anyway?"

"*Puff*—excuse me, sir, but I've been trying for so long to get in touch with a member of the human race that I forgot my manners. May I tell you my story?"

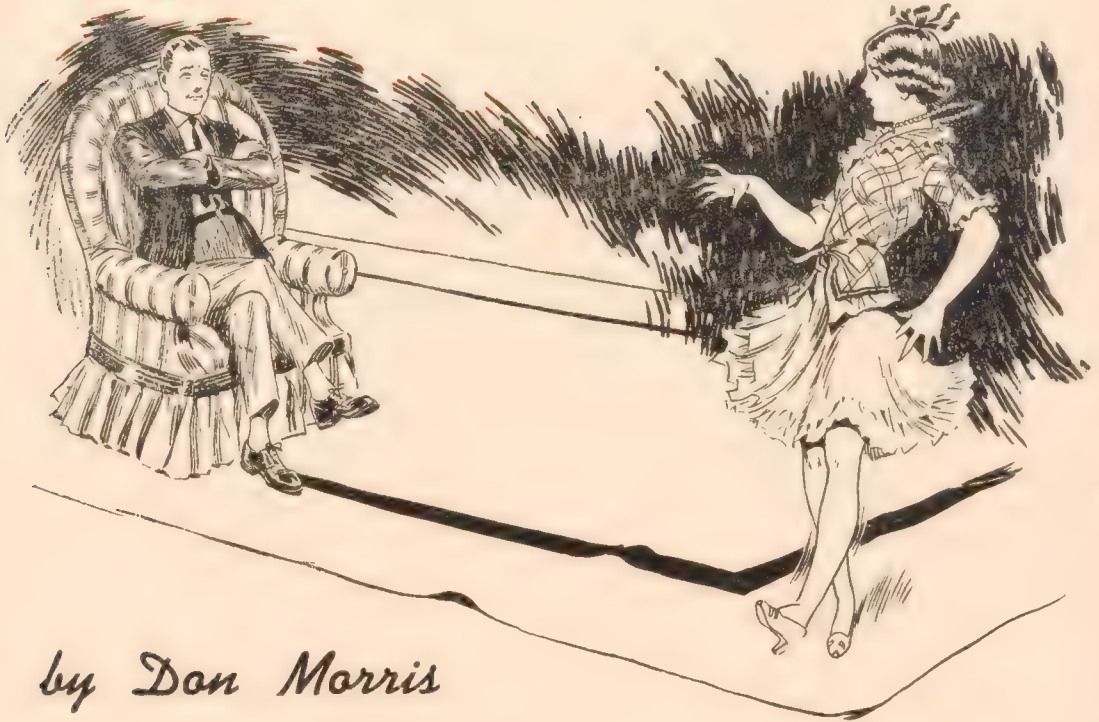
I SQUINTED down the tube, wondered what Cynthia would think of this. It was bad enough to be crossed up with my girl over a misunderstanding, without the possibility that she would think I was nuts, both plain and fancy, telling a story of a microscopic creature that looked like a human with wings and could talk.

But all I said was: "Go ahead."

"Well, sir, I'm one of the Good Gremlins. There are some, you know—or rather, you don't know. In fact, there are a great many more Good Gremlins than there are Bad Grem-

Griggle

WHEREIN A BILLION GOOD GREMLINS GANG UP TO HELP OUR HERO
WIN BACK THE AFFECTIONS OF A SUSPICIOUS LADY



by Don Morris

lins, but the bad ones have had all the publicity, and we—"

"Need a press-agent," I murmured impolitely.

"—have had scouts out for a long time now to try to get in touch with the human race so our story could be told. But none of us can be seen by the human eye except our leader, the Great Gray Gremlin, who is the Grand Griggle of the Good Gremlin Group; and he is only the size of a match-head. I tell you, it's been a job."

Maybe I shouldn't have felt there still was a gag connected with it somewhere, but all I could say was: "If it's a job you want, you'll have to see the United States Employment Service."

"Pleasel!" came the whisper imploringly. "I'm the first Good Gremlin to be in communication with a human, and you *must* help! Don't you want to let the world know there are Good Gremlins as well as bad ones?"

"Maybe," I conceded. "But how do I know you are telling the truth?"

"Let us do you a service," he pleaded. I suppose it was "he"—I never was able to tell about that, except that the wings of the males were

shorter. "You know that the bad Gremlins never help anybody. We will help you, if you will tell us what you want done, and I will get the Great Gray Gremlin, the Grand Griggle of the Good Gremlin Group, to direct anything you want done. Then you will know we are Good Gremlins who want to help people."

I thought of pinching myself to be sure I was awake, but it always had seemed a silly procedure to me. If I weren't awake, it would be only a dream pinch, and so what? But because there was something I wanted badly,—my girl back again,—it seemed to me that it was worth asking, even if I woke up on the floor with the blankets strangling me.

So I said: "All right. If this is all the result of overwork, I can get a good night's sleep and you'll go away forever. Nobody will know. But if you really have something, I'll make a deal. I'll tell the world about the Good Gremlins if you will first prove to me that you can do anything at all except make faces under a microscope, and second, persuade my girl that she ought to marry me."

The tiny face under the lens looked angelic. "I think we can do both, if

you really are the sort of character that a girl should marry. You see, we're very careful. But I will have the Great Gray Griggle Gremlin here tomorrow afternoon after everyone else has left the laboratory, and he will show you. . . . Good night."

I looked carefully, but all the microscope showed was the craters of the mouthpiece.

THE next afternoon I dawdled. I couldn't honestly say what I expected, yet I waited until all the others were gone. I turned on the amplifier, just in case.

"No need to do that," said a voice like a high thin note on the violin. "You can hear me quite easily. I'm the Great Gray Griggle Gremlin, keeping an appointment made with you yesterday by one of our order."

I said "How do you do?" politely, and looked down at my desk for the source of the sound. There, perched comfortably on a small rubber band which he was using as a bench, was a creature similar to the one I had seen under the microscope, except that he was perhaps the size of the lead in the sharpened end of a pencil. His wings were a brilliant red, and he set them



"You kept moving that microphone back and forth," shouted the creature. "Every time you moved it, I fell into another hole!"

off with a yellow sash tied around his middle. On his head was a military-type cap, evidently denoting his rank.

"I do very well," he replied, "except for the difficulty I've had getting in touch with a human to demonstrate that there are Good Gremlins. I understand that you want us to show what we can do."

"Yes," I replied, wondering how you went about testing a Good Gremlin. "Did you bring any of your followers with you?"

"Only a few," he answered, "—but enough for whatever you may want done, I think. I told them to wait in that tree outside the window."

I looked at the tree, and it seemed normal to me. I don't know why I was expecting it to appear changed, since the Good Gremlin tribe can be seen only under a microscope. But the tree itself gave me an idea; it long had blocked light and air from the laboratory, and we'd often talked of getting it cut down, but never got around to it.

"That tree cuts off light," I remarked casually, as if musing to myself.

Instantly the Griggle jumped from his perch on the rubber band, saluted smartly, and strode to the edge of the desk. From his sash he pulled a tiny whistle, and began blowing sharp blasts, obviously some code of signals. After a series, he paused and turned to me.

"Watch." Then one long whistle blast.

As I stared in amazement, every leaf on the tree floated gently to the ground. I felt actually dizzy, and gripped the arms of my chair to steady myself.

"Does that give enough light now?" asked the Griggle, with an amused smile on his face.

I was only shaking my head to clear it, but he must have thought I meant no, because the whistle blasts began again. The long blast at the end signaled something about to happen.

Something did. The tree rose right out of the ground and was gently laid to earth by invisible hands.

WHEN I had caught my breath, I managed to ask: "Did you say there were only a few Good Gremlins in that tree?"

"A comparatively small group," was the reply. "About the size of the Federal budget, figuring Gremlins instead of dollars."

When I couldn't say anything, he went right on talking. "By putting the force of a few billion Gremlins together in one spot, we can do practically anything. To lift that tree up out of the ground, as many as could get a handhold on the trunk and branches did so, then joined hands with still others in almost endless chains. When they were ready, they simply started beating their wings, and the combined force produced the result you saw. The total population of Good Gremlins numbers so many trillions that we actually have lost count. By calling in enough Gremlins, we could lift a battleship, if we wanted to. In fact, you may remem-

ber that the Jap battleship *Kongo* disappeared mysteriously? It's a military secret what happened, but if I were allowed to talk—"

I had recovered my composure by this time, and I began to see great opportunities in the Good Gremlins. I was glad they were on my side, and it was time to see whether there was a serious possibility that they could help me with Cynthia.

MY trouble with Cynthia stemmed from the fact she was reforming me, long after I had ceased to need reform. As I said, I've been on the water-wagon for a year, but she watches me with a hawk eye, albeit a beautiful soft brown one, and a wonderful hawk with blonde foaming tresses that shimmer in the sunlight like a golden waterfall. . . . The sight of Cynthia makes me talk like that.

Anyway, I'd promised her I would quit drinking, and I had. The night I went by her home, exhausted from a really terrific struggle over a new chemical formula that was dangerous to handle, I also had a high fever, and I must have acted as if I was out of my head.

She said I'd broken my promise about drinking; and when I couldn't work for three days after that, she was sure it was a hang-over and the No. 1 shakes. She was all wrong, but that didn't help me any.

So I told all this to the Great Gray Gremlin, the Grand Griggle of the Good Gremlin Group, and asked his help. We talked a long time about it, and we made a plan. Boy, did we make a plan! It was only necessary for me to get an audience with the Cynthia job, and the Gremlins would do the rest.

Getting the audience wasn't easy, because my beloved darling, which is what I call her in her more reasonable moments, wasn't speaking to me in person. But I told her on the telephone that I thought I could prove an injustice had been done, and the least she could do in common fairness was to see me and listen to my case.

Finally she agreed. I talked long and carefully with the Griggle, and he agreed to be there with as many of his cohorts as were necessary. So that there would be no possibility of discovery, he was to ride in my ear. He fitted nicely, except for tickling, and the possibility that somebody would think I harbored insects. I could hear his whispers quite plainly, but I couldn't talk to him without making any casual observer wonder whether I was worrying out loud about my income-tax.

So we met Cynthia, the Gremlins and I—only, she didn't know of the vast invisible audience. I almost forgot it myself, she was so lovely and my

heart was so full. My left ear was full too, with the Griggle perched there, but I didn't think of that.

I almost lost courage for what I had to do, but I caught myself in time and drew a deep breath.

"Cynthia," I said sternly, looking at her with the best frown I could muster, "it is hardly fitting that you should accuse me of having broken my solemn pledge about drinking, and yet you arrive as full as a tick yourself."

She hadn't had a drink and I knew it, because she never touches the stuff, but her shocked expression was more than I had bargained for. She looked, indeed, as if I had struck her across the face.

But I had to go on with the act. "As tight as a turkey," I insisted. "Why, you couldn't even walk a straight line. Let's see you try it!" I indicated the edge of the rug as a line to walk.

As if hypnotized, or perhaps merely humoring a man out of his mind, she started down the edge of the rug. That was the signal for the Gremlins to go to work.

They did.

Cynthia swayed, and caught herself with an exclamation. She started again and tripped over her own feet. Down the edge of the rug line she came, weaving and staggering like a New Year's Eve lush. Her eyes and open mouth were only symptoms of disbelief, but if she had been acting the part of a drunk, it couldn't have been more convincing. As she reached the end of the rug, she faced a mirror and saw herself. I had to turn my head to keep from giving the show away.

"You see?" I challenged. "You can't even walk a straight line. I told you so; you're thoroughly intoxicated."

"That's not so!" she retorted, her mind still working, even in its bewilderment. "I don't know what made me stumble, but I never drink."

"All right, then—let's see you close your eyes and touch your index finger to the end of your nose. Anybody who is sober can do it."

Angry and determined now, she closed her eyes to take the test that would prove her case. But my Gremlins still were working under instruc-

tion. As her finger approached the end of her nose, it veered off and went into her ear. She tried it again and poked herself in the eye, bringing tears. After the third attempt, during which she couldn't even force her finger close enough to her face to touch it, she gave up, opened her eyes, and glared at me in desperation.

I shrugged my shoulders. "It's amazing to me that you should criticize me for taking a drink—which incidentally I did *not* do—when it's obvious that you hit the bottle like a dipsomaniac yourself. I'll bet you can't even talk straight—let's hear you say, 'Sickled Susie sicked a sack of sickled peppers.'"

Without thinking, she started: "Sickled Susie sicked—wait a minute! What sense does that make?"

"Exactly as I thought!" I exclaimed jubilantly. "Not only can you not say it without your tongue thickening up like molasses, but also you can't even make sense of anything. I don't think I can ever forgive you!"

That was a cue line for the Gremlins, and the Griggle in my ear said sharply: "Sit down again!"

I folded into my chair, as if in desperation. Cynthia swayed across the room toward me, apparently out of control. Actually she was really out of control, since the Gremlins were guiding her movements, but she didn't know that.

THE next moment she popped into my lap, apparently of her own volition.

"My good woman," I said indignantly, "I won't have you trying to use your wiles on me, even if you are intoxicated. I sha'n't forgive you just because you now see the error of your ways and want to make up for the grievous wrongs you have done me. Indeed, I sha'n't."

Tears were close to her eyes, but she didn't attempt to move from my lap. Maybe the Gremlins were keeping her from getting up, but I hadn't instructed the Griggle to order that. Maybe she just wanted to be there—which was what I wanted too, though

not with several billion Gremlins looking on, even good ones.

"I just don't know what has happened to me," she said finally. "I know I haven't had any liquor, and maybe—just possibly—I was hasty in accusing you of breaking your pledge not to drink."

That was what I wanted to hear, of course, but I had to give her the final shock. This was the pay-off.

"If you want to prove to me that you are not a drinking woman, you'll let me take you for a ride—to sober you up, of course—so that you can listen to me prove my own case."

It probably didn't make sense to her, but I knew she was in no position to object. She didn't.

The taxi was waiting at the door; I'd arranged that in advance, though perhaps I should have told the driver what he was getting into. Anyway, we got in.

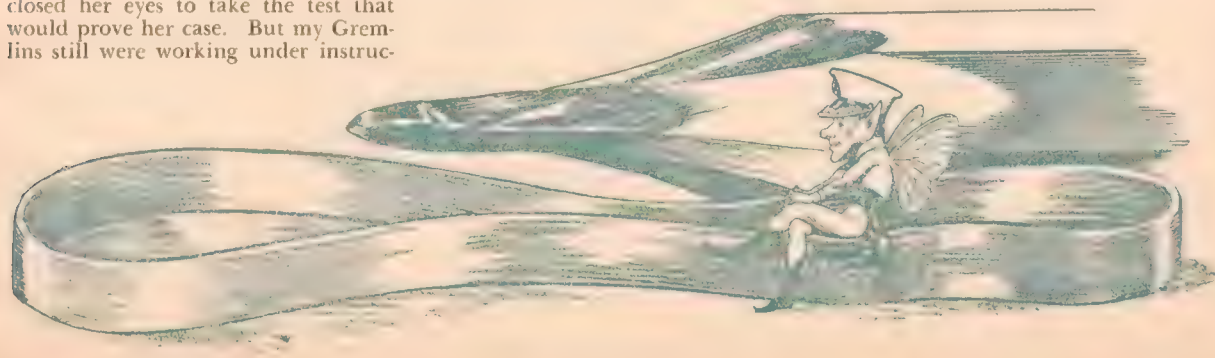
Immediately the car began weaving erratically. The Gremlins were on the job, all right. All I expected to prove was that anybody might at some time appear to be woozy without actually having taken a drink, but I didn't expect the driver's reaction when I reproved him.

"Look here, driver," I said sharply, "you're apparently in no condition to be handling this automobile. Let us out now!"

He pulled over to the curb, and climbed out. "Listen, mug, I dunno what made the hack joik around like that, but nobody can tell me I'm drunk." He pulled off his coat and cap, tossing them in the front seat. "You get out, and we'll settle this right now."

Now, I'm medium build and no sissy, but the driver weighed something over two hundred pounds and looked as if he could have picked up the cab with his little finger. I hadn't bargained for a situation like that. Cynthia looked at me as if she thought I knew what to do about it. I didn't.

The Griggle in my ear came to the rescue, to my vast relief. "I'll take care of it," he said. "Tell the man to—what is the word?—scram."



Emphatically, I told the man to scram, using a number of words and some considerable time. Meanwhile, my ear was nearly bursting with the series of whistle blasts that the Griggle was issuing from it. Both Cynthia and the driver kept turning their heads to see where the whistling was coming from, but I went on shouting as loudly as I could.

The final long blast let me know the Gremlins had their orders and were going into action. With as much vigor as I could muster, I told the cab-driver: "You get out of here this instant!"

He did. The Gremlins had him of course, but the bewildered expression on his face as he was whisked around the corner, apparently running away from me out of pure fright, was something to see, though nobody else could have enjoyed it as much as I did.

Then I saw something that escaped Cynthia's notice. The cab-driver's coat and cap still were on the front seat, and I saw one arm begin to fill up with an invisible substance. I knew instantly what was happening, and so, of course, did the Griggle, but I was in no position to tell him he was carrying things too far. The Gremlins filled up the other arm, and the body of the coat. The coat seated itself before the wheel, and the cap whisked itself above the collar. The cab was eased into gear and we started moving.

It took a moment for Cynthia to realize that we shouldn't be rolling down the street after the driver had

darted away around the corner, but when she did take it in, she screamed a scream that must have had the air-raid wardens for blocks around running to their posts.

"Look!" She pointed a shaky finger at the supposedly empty cap and coat that were driving our taxi. "Look! I think I'm going crazy!"

I didn't have to look. I knew. But I didn't expect the policeman to come running up because of her screams. The situation rapidly was getting out of hand as the taxi stopped.

THE Griggle was still on the job, though: He whispered in my ear: "Do you want us to eliminate the policeman from the scene?"

Just as I was about to answer, the policeman got a good look at our "driver." His mouth dropped open, and his face took on a greenish tinge. For a long moment he just looked, and then he fainted quietly at the curb.

Cynthia screamed again. By that time I was ready to faint quietly at the curb too, but I opened the cab door and led her out quickly. On a parkway bench across the street, hidden by some very welcome bushes, I sat us down. When I had regained my own composure, I asked:

"Are you convinced that almost anybody can sometimes be a victim of circumstances—can even appear to be drunk when he hasn't had a drink?"

She nodded. If the nod was faint, at least the agreement was wholehearted.

"Then will you take my word for it that the night you accused me of drinking, I was just worn out and had a high fever?"

She nodded again. I kissed her. I must have been kissing her for a very long time before I remembered that probably billions of Good Gremlins were watching me. What made me remember was the Griggle whispering in my ear: "Atta boy!"

So I cuddled Cynthia close to keep her from seeing anything while I stuck a finger gently in my left ear and gave the Griggle, a bridge to clamber out on. He did, and I waved him away with a wink and a smile. Being as smart as they come, he got the idea, and all of a sudden he wasn't there any more. I couldn't be positively sure the billions of his followers were leaving, but I had confidence that I was alone with my girl.

Then I told her the whole story. I think a fellow should tell his prospective wife everything—unless it's really incriminating. I told her all about the Good Gremlins and how they helped me, and what they had done for me to prove that anybody can be woozy sometimes without having had a drink.

Somehow I think to this day she doesn't believe me. But it doesn't matter.

We're married now.

And as for my promise to let the world know there are Good Gremlins—and they really were good to me—this story is the fulfillment of my pledge.



*Illustrated by
Leon D'Emo*

QUEEN of my HEART

One of the strangest cases of the psychologist-detective Dr. Wycherley

by *Max Rittenberg*

"**T**HERE they are," whispered Major Fitzalan, inclining his head to indicate to Dr. Wycherley the objects of his remark. "It's really a pathetic sight, isn't it?"

"I call it a horrible sight!" put in Mrs. Fitzalan. "There's my uncle, blind and helpless, and there's that mercenary scoundrel using his blindness and his helplessness to bolster up this wicked imposture. If only he could get his deserts! But then, he's clever, very clever—he'd squirm out of any trap."

It was on the lawns at the Henley Regatta, gay with the pinks and blues of frocks and blazers, sunshades and college ribbons, joyously surgent with the spirit of youth, rippling with young life. And in a corner of the lawns sat old Lord Dallas—a blind man drinking in the sounds of joyous youth, and in them remembering his own youth when he too threw soul into the straining oar and drank deep of the cup of victory. There was a race in progress, and as the bands of undergraduates ran by the towpath, shouting and cheering on their college crews, a flush came into the old man's face as if he felt his hands once again upon the oar.

By his side sat the man who had stirred Mrs. Fitzalan's indignation—a tall, dark, heavily-framed man of forty-five, a man with a hard straight eye and a mouth that told of strength in reserve—a silent, guarded man who spoke little, and then in short, abrupt sentences—a reserved, secretive man.

After twenty years of wanderings he had come back to claim his place as the son and heir of Lord Dallas, now blind and feeble and with few years of life left to him. That was the *claim* of the stranger.

"It was over twenty years ago that Morton Langdale quarreled with his father and flung out of the house," explained Major Fitzalan in amplification of a previous conversation

wherein he had asked for Dr. Wycherley's help. "Nothing was heard of him directly; he never wrote to his relatives. Indirectly we heard that he was fighting with the United States Army in the Philippines, and then he disappeared again out of our knowledge. That Philippine episode may be important if it comes to a lawsuit, because we might be able to hunt out some one who knew the real Morton Langdale there."

His wife shook her head in contradiction. "We should stand a very poor chance in a lawsuit. That, I'm quite sure of. If my uncle continues to acknowledge him as his son, it will be taken as overwhelming proof." Her face was strained with anxiety. "That's why I came to you, Doctor—Claire Devenish had told me about the marvelous power of getting at peoples' minds which you—"

Dr. Wycherley interrupted with a gesture of depreciation: "Please do not exaggerate my powers. I am no wonder-worker—merely a student of the human mind—still a student."

But Mrs. Fitzalan would allow no self-depreciation on the part of the doctor to stand in her way; now she repeated volubly what she had heard of the strange case of Mrs. Devenish and the Indian adept, a story that lost nothing of its "marvelous" aspect in the telling, and concluded by bringing it round to the present case. "If you could manage that kind of thing, Doctor, surely you could find some way of getting at my uncle's mind and showing him what a horrible imposture is being practised. You see, anything we have urged has been discounted by our self-interest. That's the point that's driving me to desperation. When we say this man's an impostor—another 'Roger Tichborne'—the answer comes at once: Major Fitzalan is next heir to the title and therefore

prejudiced. No one will believe that we can act from anything but selfish motives."

"To have our name pass into the hands of a man like that—to see Greeve Hall lorded over by a scoundrel from God knows where! That's what sticks in my throat!" The sincerity of Major Fitzalan's voice was unmistakable; there could be no doubt how deeply he felt the wrong that was being done not only to himself but to his race.

Yet Dr. Wycherley answered with the caution of the scientist: "All this rests on the supposition that we are dealing with an impostor. So far, I have heard only your side of the case, and I cannot promise to act until I have fully assured myself—"

"I can give you a dozen proofs, fifty proofs!" interrupted Mrs. Fitzalan. "From the first moment I set eyes on him I felt my suspicions. And then the little points that tell a woman so much—his secretiveness, his constant air of being on guard. Oh, the man has been splendidly coached in his part, and he's devilishly clever, but if my uncle were not blind and a little feeble in mind he would have seen through him weeks ago. But the crowning proof is this." She glanced around to make sure that there were no eavesdroppers, but no one was taking any notice of them. Then she drew out from her satchel-bag a cheap, common sheet of letter-paper written on in an ill-formed, uneducated hand, and passed it to Dr. Wycherley.

EXAMINING is very closely, the psychologist asked: "How did this come into your hands?"

Major Fitzalan flushed perceptibly as he answered: "We—er—intercepted the letter. I know it sounds a deuced unsporting thing to do, but when you're dealing with a—"

His wife took up his hesitating words in her own decisive fashion: "One has to meet a scoundrel on his

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own grounds. I've not the slightest compunction in the matter. I felt that letter held the key to the situation, and I was amply justified in getting hold of it. You see what the letter amounts to, Doctor—a veiled threat to extort money from him. No name is given—no address. Now no man can be blackmailed without good cause."

Dr. Wycherley did not answer this. His gaze was fixed on old Lord Dallas in the far corner of the lawns. Another race was in progress, and the wild shouting and cheering on the towpath told that it was a neck-and-neck struggle between Trinity Hall, Lord Dallas' own college, and Leander. In his excitement, the old man had risen from his chair as though his sightless eyes could see over the heads of the crowd; quite suddenly he fell back clutching at his chair. The excitement had caught at his heart.

Dr. Wycherley moved forward swiftly to his aid. Morton Langdale (or the man who had taken that name) had laid the old man on the grass before the doctor had reached the scene, and was loosening his collar. In one glance he took in Dr. Wycherley and had him mentally classified.

"Thanks," said Langdale abruptly, before word had been spoken. "You're wanted, Doctor. Give orders, and I'll see them carried out."

GREEVE HALL lies a few miles back from the river at Henley, deep in the woods that clothe the hills on the Berkshire side. From the observatory tower—which Lord Dallas had used for his hobby of astronomy—you look out over thicker and parkland sweeping down in dark green stateliness to the lush meadows where the Thames winds in and out as a band of splendid silver. It was a house and land breathing of old traditions, high ideals, the shaping of centuries. They fitted well with the fine-strung Latin motto of the Langdale family, "I hold no shame."

Lord Dallas had been taken back at once to Greeve Hall, and the psychologist had ordered for him complete rest for several days at least. A fainting attack which would have been a trifling moment for a young man might have serious consequences for an old man of seventy. With the professional permission of the family doctor, Dr. Wycherley was remaining at Greeve Hall for a few days until his patient should be entirely restored. He found a willing collaborator in Miss Seton, a distant relation of the family, who for many years past had stayed at Greeve Hall to keep the cares of his position away from the shoulders of Lord Dallas. She was devoted to him: A sweet, gentle woman, scarcely marked by the passage of forty years—

one of those Englishwomen whose lives are given to good works, which in return give them perennial youth—an Englishwoman of the countryside, subtly suggestive of lavender and rosemary and sweet William and the other old-world flowers that grow by the south wall in quiet leisure and very pleasant fragrance.

During his brief stay, Dr. Wycherley was closely observing Morton Langdale, who aroused his professional interest to a high pitch. The man had a mind encased, as it were, in steel. Though with most men and women the mental healer could read deep into their thoughts and emotions, in the case of this man he was strangely baffled. It was as though Langdale kept tight grip of his thoughts behind the barrier of his will.

An unusual case, was Langdale's, and therefore of peculiar interest to Dr. Wycherley. He had the zest of the collector for the rare specimen. He could not rest content until he had it pinned out in his collection, properly classified and labeled; and on his part, Langdale seemed to be guardedly studying the doctor. In the smoking-room, one evening, there had been long silences between them. Langdale had broken one of these long silences with the strange, disconnected remark:

"What is the supreme test of courage?"

Dr. Wycherley considered for some moments before replying: "It depends on the individual temperament. To a few, to sacrifice life. To more, to sacrifice love. To most, to sacrifice the choice of life—to take the living death with a smiling face and bear with it uncomplainingly to the end. Think of the men and women who suffer in silence, showing a brave cheerfulness to the world; think of the X-ray martyrs, of Father Damien—"

"Yes." There was abrupt agreement in the tone. But Langdale did not add to his monosyllable, and so the doctor continued after a pause:

"One rarely hears of the world's real heroes. They make no headlines for the newspapers. Their living death makes no more stir than a bubble in the stormy Atlantic. Outside their small circle no one knows of them; even within their circle few suspect the sacrifice that has been made."

"Then what good do they do?"

The leading point of these questions was not apparent, but Dr. Wycherley wished keenly to get behind the reserve of this silent, secretive man, and he was glad to keep the apparently purposeless conversation proceeding. He replied: "I am no pessimist. I do not believe theirs is waste effort. There is a mental *aura* that radiates out from a man which makes for good or for evil in others—

a silent, unseen urge. There is no name for it—no way of detecting or measuring or analyzing it. Yet it is one of the great realities. Do you agree with me?"

"Possibly," was the abrupt answer, and Langdale relapsed into silence again. Presently he suppressed a yawn, and remarked: "I think I shall be getting off to bed. Ring for anything you want. Good night."

WHEN he had left, Dr. Wycherley rolled a double-length cigarette, lit it and held it at arm's length, and proceeded to concentrate his gaze upon it. According to his custom when puzzled by a case of observation, he wished to throw himself into a light hypnotic sleep so as to recover all of the impressions that Langdale's presence had radiated into his subconscious mind.

The cigarette burned slowly through, and when the burning end scorched the doctor's fingertips he awoke with a start. Then he quickly left the smoking-room and mounted up to the high tower where Lord Dallas carried out his astronomical hobby. The room was now unoccupied. Dr. Wycherley took up a small night glass from among the divers telescopes with which the room was equipped, and began methodically to sweep the surrounding woods and parklands, dark in the shadows but brilliant in the moonlight, from the crest of Gleydon Rise down to the lush meadows that border the silvery Thames. In his systematic, scientific fashion, he took strip after strip of the territory and searched every moonlit glade for the object he had in mind.

In his light hypnotic sleep there had come to the doctor a strong impression that Langdale was being menaced that evening. Doubtless it would be something in connection with the anonymous letter which Mrs. Fitzalan had showed him. And so, though Dr. Wycherley greatly disliked the idea of shadowing any man, he felt that here was a case where ordinary feelings must be put aside. The happiness of too many people was involved to allow his own fine scruples to stand in the way of his duty to others.

It was a long while before he found the object of his search—a man standing under the shadow of a broad oak tree, waiting on some appointment. Dr. Wycherley fixed his telescope on a support of cushions and sat down to keep watch. The man was a rough, stocky, strong, muscular figure—probably a sailor or a navvy of some kind. He moved about impatiently under the tree as though he were being kept waiting.

Presently the doctor saw the figure of Morton Langdale moving quietly

and unhurriedly down the parkland, under the shadows of the trees and hedges, going to keep his appointment. He was unhurried in his movements, as if he were designedly holding his man waiting, yet he kept closely to the shadows as though secrecy were vital.

When the two men came face to face under the shadow of the oak tree there was very evidently recrimination from the sailor. It was a strangely silent quarrel that Dr. Wycherley was witnessing through his telescope. No sound could come to him from that distance, and he bent every faculty of mind to the task of trying to read what they were saying from the gestures and attitudes.

Words ran high on the part of the sailorman, but Langdale was at first cool and collected. He was trying to beat down the other man by force of will. There was a tense strain of attitude that told of the tense grip of mind. Presently the strain of holding himself against the jibes or threats passed the breaking-point, and he whipped forward on the sailor with clenched fists and blazing eyes. For a moment the man slunk back, and then there came from him some retort that caused Langdale to drop his fists and droop his shoulders in defeat. He took out his pocket-book and began to count out bank-notes. Dr. Wycherley could see the sailorman eagerly clutching his booty and crinkling the notes one by one to satisfy himself of their genuineness.

LANGDALE stood moodily under the oak tree long after the man had left with his plunder. His tall frame drooped—in his attitude was the bitter realization of moral cowardice. Slowly he began to retrace his way, while Dr. Wycherley watched him concentratedly through his telescope.

"What have you seen?" asked a low, gentle voice at his elbow, and he turned to find beside him Miss Dorothy Seton, with a lace shawl thrown around her head against the night air. In her voice there was pitiful anxiety. "What is happening to him?"

"To—"

"To Morton—to Mr. Langdale. I want to know what it all means, even more than you do! Oh, tell me, what is threatening him, what does all this mystery mean?"

Dr. Wycherley looked back at her with understanding and deep sympathy. "I see. You believe in him."

A flush came into her face, and there was a note of pride in her voice as she answered: "I know."

"You knew Mr. Langdale before he went away, twenty years ago? Ah, I see that you knew him well. More than well. There was understanding between you?"

"He was—very dear to me." Her face was turned away into deep shadows. She paused, but the sympathy that had lain in Dr. Wycherley's voice drove her to fuller confidence. "I thought at the time that he cared for me too. It was just such a night as this when we sat together under the big cedar-tree in the garden at the Henley Week ball. How grave it looks, the old cedar-tree—how heavy with memories! The starlight touched softly on the old branches, as if it were smoothing away the wrinkles of age. The damask roses by the windows of the ballroom were languorous with scent. The orchestra was playing 'Queen of My Heart.' It was new then—more than twenty years ago. Perhaps today it would sound tawdry, but then—And there was a light in his eyes that—Oh, why am I telling you all this?"

"Because you have my very deep sympathy. Because I would help you in any way possible to me. And you have been waiting for him these twenty years?"

"Yes." Her answer was barely audible. "So when he came back I knew it was he. How could I be mistaken? And yet he came back cold and distant, and I don't understand. He is so changed—so reserved and secretive. There is some mystery about him, and I don't understand it. Tell me what it is! Are you his friend?"

It was difficult for Dr. Wycherley to answer this. "I am an observer," he said slowly, "a student of men and women. The mystery around Mr. Langdale has intrigued me. But rest assured of this; that so far as it lies within my power to serve you I will do so. Now tell me this: what you have just confided to me, has it passed to anyone else?"

"To no one else. There is something about you, Doctor, that draws one's confidences. Something magnetic, compelling. You are practically a stranger to me, and yet I felt you would understand and sympathize—"

"It is a gift I value very greatly. Yes, you were right to tell me this. It will help more than you can possibly guess. I see a way, a method of making sure!" The doctor's eye was lighting with the enthusiasm of the scientist. "A beautiful method! Of course the technique of psycho-analysis is not new, yet the application would be novel in the extreme. But these details would scarcely interest you. You will excuse the scientific temperament, will you not? I was forgetting to answer your question. You asked what is happening to Mr. Langdale, and I am at liberty to tell you this: he is being blackmailed. As to the cause, I am now investigating."

"But he would never have done anything criminal! I know him so

well. He is the soul of honor. The Langdales are a race with fine traditions, and splendid ideals, and Morton is a true Langdale. You know our motto—I hold no shame."

"You said that the orchestra was playing 'Queen of My Heart' on that night of the ball, twenty years ago?"

"Yes, but why? How could that possibly help in unraveling the mystery?" she answered in open surprise.

Dr. Wycherley did not answer this directly. "Please mention to no one whatever that we have been talking about Mr. Langdale. This is vital. Now the night air is getting chill, Miss Seton. As a doctor, may I suggest that you retire to rest?"

MAJOR FITZALAN's river bungalow "*Mon Repos*" was within easy distance of Greeve Hall. It was a pretty little toy house with its riot of clambering roses and wisteria and its dainty summer rooms paneled in white wood and carpeted with cool green matting. Amongst the Liberty furniture, there was one chair in curious contrast to the rest—a stiff, plush-covered armchair with the armrests in polished nickel like a dentist's chair.

Dr. Wycherley had had it brought from London for a special and important purpose. Out of sight, covered electric wires ran under the matting from the chair to a partition wall in white wood and through into a small bedroom behind. And in this small room he had installed—of course with the Fitzalans' permission—an elaborate piece of scientific apparatus connected with the two electric wires that ran to the plush-covered armchair.

The most striking feature of the apparatus was a revolving "drum" wrapped round with soot-blackened paper. Against this rested a very light metal pointer connected electrically with the wires and a battery of Bunsen cells. To the physiologist such a piece of apparatus is very familiar—he uses it in scores of experiments where blood-pressure curves or nerve-current curves have to be registered.

Major Fitzalan had regarded it with curiosity and a little soldierly contempt for whatever he did not thoroughly understand. Dr. Wycherley was explaining as he fitted up the connections and made his preliminary tests:

"To-night we should be able to get conclusive, incontrovertible evidence concerning Morton Langdale (or the man who claims his name). He has accepted your wife's invitation to dinner and the informal concert afterward, and she will maneuver him into that plush-covered armchair. When he places his two hands on the nickel armrests, according to his usual habit, that completes the electric circuit, and

then we have a current passing through his body and connected with this metal pointer by relay."

"Surely he would feel the current?" suggested the Major, doubtfully.

"No, it is too weak. Sit in the chair and try for yourself."

The host did so, and admitted that there was nothing particular to be felt. "But what happens then?" he inquired.

"The concert goes through according to the program I have arranged with your wife."

"And then?"

Dr. Wycherley finished with an adjustment of the soot-blackened cylinder. "A man can hide his feelings and emotions so that not one muscle quivers—so that not the faintest sign appears in face or hands or body-movement; but there is one thing he cannot control—his nerve currents. Any strong emotion in the mind sets up nerve currents, internal electric currents. Your strongly controlled, intensely reserved man may show no faintest outward sign of his feelings, but nevertheless he will reveal himself infallibly through this instrument. There is no evading it."

"It seems deuced ingenious," said the Major.

Dr. Wycherley smiled quizzically. "Meaning that in your opinion it is extremely foolish and impractical?"

The Major fumbled with a conventional denial.

"Yet," proceeded the doctor, "it is a method of technique used today by the foremost psychologists of the world. On this smoke-blackened drum we shall read to-night the workings that will tell us of Langdale's inmost thoughts."

That evening, when the concert was in full swing, with the guests gayly chatting between the songs and the light music—when Morton Langdale, still cold and reserved, sat in the plush-covered armchair and automatically laid his two hands on the metal rests—Dr. Wycherley excused himself and retired to his improvised laboratory behind the partition wall.

The current was in circuit, as his galvanometer showed; it was passing through Langdale's body via the two arms. The doctor set the drum slowly revolving by clockwork, with the metal pointer lightly pressing against it and scratching a thin line through the smoky coating.

At the piano Mrs. Fitzalan, by pre-arrangement, had started a popular waltz-air from the musical comedy of the day. The line of the pointer quivered slightly, then ran on evenly. Presently came a war-song—one of Kipling's poems set to music—sung by Hubert Llewellyn, who happened to be staying with the Fitzalans for a week-end. And with that there formed

on the recording drum a ragged line that mutely testified to the emotions it was arousing behind the cold, passionless face of Morton Langdale.

And when the applause had subsided at the finish of the song, Mrs. Fitzalan laid her hands on the broad, mellow chords that form the introduction to the song from the opera of "Dorothy" that had swept over all England twenty years before, with its message of "*Why should we wait for tomorrow? You're queen of my heart tonight.*"

As Dr. Wycherley watched eagerly the soot-blackened cylinder slowly revolving against the metal pointer, there came a sudden leap in the curve and a quivering, ragged line that placed the impressive Morton Langdale beyond all doubt as the son of Lord Dallas and the aforetime lover of Dorothy Seton.

THEY were walking home together through the star-lit parklands to Greeve Hall—Dr. Wycherley and Langdale.

Said the doctor suddenly: "I owe you a very sincere apology."

"For—"

"For doubting your identity."

"Mrs. Fitzalan had her hopes, I know," answered Langdale evenly. "I have been very much afraid she would get at my father over the matter and worry him. He is old, and I want to keep anxiety away from him."

"Without your knowing it, you have tonight been put to the test."

For the first time Langdale showed open surprise: "How?"

"The details of the method are unimportant. The vital point is that you have *proved yourself*. And I have a message for you: *she* has been waiting for you these twenty years—very patiently and very steadfastly. Ever since that night at the ball—sitting out by the big cedar-tree in the star-light—while the orchestra played to you 'Queen of My Heart'!" The doctor paused and turned round, looking at his companion full in the eyes with his deep, searching gaze.

"My God!" Langdale gripped tight on his stick and was silent for a long while.

Then he burst out, as though the barriers of his self-repression had broken down and the waters of his soul must needs pour out through the shattered gates: "I came back a coward—a proved coward! I had my supreme test, and I failed! It happened in this way: I was in the war in the Philippines, fighting in the United States Army. I carried out some risky bits of work, and at the time I thought that was courage. I didn't know the elementary meaning of the word. That kind of thing is child's play."

He laughed bitterly at himself. "Then after the war I fell in love with a very beautiful young Spanish girl—or rather, half Spanish, half Filipino. I was carried out of myself and I married her. My ardor cooled down; hers continued. I went away on a pearling expedition, and when I came back to her the most ghastly discovery possible met my eyes."

He paused in horror of his recollection.

"She had developed leprosy—it had just begun. It is rare out there, but it exists. They quarantined us on San Felipe island—she and myself, because I was her husband and suspect. In six months' time the disease had gained strong hold of her, but I was untouched. Then came my supreme test. The doctors told me I was free of suspicion and could go. Manuela implored me to stay by her—implored me on her knees. But I couldn't bear with the sights of that terrible island, and the thought of staying by her while she slowly consumed away was more than I could stand." In bitter self-abasement he added: "I gave up—quitted—branded myself a coward."

Dr. Wycherley was deeply touched at this confession. He asked gently: "And that is why you are being black-mailed?"

"You know that? No, the man's story is half truth, half lie, and that is where its devilishness comes in. His story is that I was not allowed to go, but that I *escaped* from San Felipe. It's a lie. But to think of having such a lie spread around amongst people eager to believe anything to a man's discredit! And especially to have such a lie reach my father's ears! The shock would kill him. So I gave in and paid hush-money. While my father lives I shall go on paying hush-money. After that—" He paused significantly.

"Your wife?" asked Dr. Wycherley.

"She is dead now. Dead these two years. For myself, I have been examined by doctors again and again, and they tell me there is not the remotest suspicion. Now you will begin to realize that if I failed at the test, I have paid for it over and over again in remorse. As to Miss Seton, how could I go to her with this stain on my life—without telling her?"

"Then tell her," answered Dr. Wycherley firmly. "For twenty years she has been waiting—it is her right to know, and knowing, to have choice. For you it is a second test of courage, and if you rise to it you will efface your other failure. See, she is up there in the tower—her white lace shawl shows by the open window. She waits for you. Go to her."

Morton Langdale gripped the doctor's hand in silent thanks.

Wild days in old California—and a daring impersonation that risked a lynching party.

by KENNETH PERKINS

Illustrated by
Raymond Sisley

Stand-in for Trouble

THIS was a town where cattle-men would put twenty gold octagonals on the turn of a card. Neal Burbadge found that out when it cost him a stack of gold slugs to see a man's hand. One of the players, a Spanish Californian, said to him: "Señor, I understand you crossed the Plains from St. Louis, and like other *caballeros* from Missouri, you are hard to bluff. You play as if you owned cattle."

Burbadge owned nothing. But he made money at cards as well as at gambling with beef prices. That is why he was in the South buying Sepulveda and Lugo beef for the mining-camps, then cleaning the sellers at poker, crack-loo and ombre.

Weighted with the gold slugs in his money-belt, he got up from that game and went out to the Plaza. He felt as if he owned the town, and was ready for anything—a *baile* at one of the

Spanish ranches, a Mexican circus, or some more betting on a bull-and-bear fight. He was especially ready for a pretty girl to throw her arms around his neck and kiss him.

And that is just what happened.

She had come to the Pueblo of the Angels on the mule stage from San Pedro on the Coast. A crowd gathered of course to look at her; and when the news spread, more men came from the gaming-houses—Americans, Mexicans, Chileans, every angel and horse-thief in town. For the news was this: A girl had come all the way from Boston by way of Panama, where she changed ships, and her betrothed had failed to meet her at San Pedro!

She was a slim girl in a gray tight-fitting bodice. She wore a small bonnet with black aigrettes that had got bedraggled by the sea air. She was tired, thin, dejected—until she saw the man she seemed to be looking for.

And then her face brightened as if a flame had been lit inside of her. She jumped from the stage and ran straight into Neal Burbadge's arms!

Born poker-faced, Burbadge showed nothing of his astonishment. His half-smile was habitual at a time of emotion, as for instance when the wheel stops on the double-o. She could not see him clearly anyway, because of the tears in her eyes. Besides, it was dusk, and she was kissing him.

He felt her arms tightening. "Oh, Dave! I thought something had happened to you!" she exclaimed breathlessly.

Neal Burbadge knew how to euchre anyone out of a pot, so this set-up was easy. He carried it off, not only because he was a gambler but because he happened to know why she had mistaken him for this man called Dave.

On a previous visit to the Pueblo he had passed a stranger who turned

and stopped to stare. It was as if one of those gaming-houses had a huge mirror instead of a door. But it was not his reflection he saw. It was this stranger gaping at him.

Neal gaped at his double, then grinned. "I was just going in when I meet myself coming out."

"Smile at the bar?" They smiled several times and told their names. This Dave Cranby had a grist-mill in the San Gabriel Valley, had spent a year in the mines, had served in the Southern California Militia. At present he was mainly concerned in persuading a girl to come West to marry him. "Her uncle is supercargo on a steamer trading between 'Frisco and Panama," Cranby explained. "She could come with him. But she wants my picture first. Wants to know how much I've changed in five years, before she can make up her mind. Don't blame her. Let's smile again."

They were eying each other in the bar mirror. Shoulder to shoulder, they did not look so much alike after all. This man Dave Cranby had bigger ears and a fatter chin, and although tall, he was not as tall as Burbadge—or as debonair.

Neal said as they had their third brandy squash: "That reminds me—I mean what you said about sending a picture back East. I promised my mother in St. Louis I'd do that. Never got to it, somehow."

Trained as a gambler to read faces, he saw Dave Cranby's eyes narrow a little as if he were hatching a plot. "What say we go over to Doc Macfarland's drug-store," Cranby said, "and have him take a couple daguerreotypes? No use putting it off."

They went to Doc Macfarland's.

When Neal called for the finished daguerreotype next day, the apothecary handed him something that certainly looked like him, but it had a grim sneer and knitted eyebrows as if he wanted to murder somebody.

"This isn't my picture," Neal said. "I can tell by the coat. I was wearing this same olive-green coat and velvet vest I have on now. He was wearing a clawhammer."

"Well, I declare!" the Doc said. "You looked so much alike I couldn't tell you apart—except when you were together." He studied the murderous likeness. "I let him choose which one was his, and he took the *good* one! Guess it's a horse on me!"

"On you! Hell, man, he's using my picture to hornswoggle a girl to come to California!"

AND this was the girl who, weeks later, rushed into Neal's arms. With the crowd looking on, she pushed herself away from him a little, confused. Then her eyes opened, enormous. "It's funny! I'm beside my-

self with joy, but—you seem—I don't know how it is, you seem to be someone else!"

"It's that way after five years," Neal said without batting an eye.

"Yes, of course. You were only nineteen and I was just a snip of a girl when you said you'd wait for me to grow up—"

Over her drooping aigrettes Neal saw a scowling, side-whiskered face and a beaver hat. "You mean you—you are Dave Cranby!" the man said as if aghast at the discovery.

The girl laughed at him over her shoulder: "Who else would I be kissing before such a crowd! Dave, this is Uncle Jebediah."

Neal Burbadge remembered vaguely that she was to come West with an uncle. They shook hands, but Uncle Jebediah's eyes were like nail-tops behind the raw Yankee cheekbones. He did not release Neal's hand, but gave him a sudden pull. Neal found himself smack against the lank bony fellow, chest to chest. "Pretty rash play you're pulling!" the uncle whispered. "You want to be shot—or what?"

The girl stepped up to them, looking puzzled.

"What'd you say, Uncle?"

"I said I wanted a drink." His grip on Neal's hand was inescapable. "Come on, pilgrim—into the hotel. Quick!"

Neal had the definite urge to slip away through the crowd before the real Dave Cranby turned up and killed him. But with the crowd parting slightly, the stage-driver and his Indian outriders following with carpet-bags, and with the girl clinging to his arm, he could go nowhere else—except into the old Eldorado Hotel.

This uncle, Neal said to himself, was something to worry about. He was a burned, long-boned fierce-looking customer, and he had a horse-pistol on his thigh. And there were other armed men, Neal noticed, who had followed through the crowd to the Eldorado's door. He had seen them looking at him, scowling from under their flat-brimmed Spanish hats.

The uncle for the moment seemed mainly concerned with getting the girl into her room and out of the way. He made reservations in a hurry. And this left her standing in front of Neal, looking up at his face again.

It was darker here in the hotel, for which he was thankful, but a Mission Indian was lighting lamps. The light grew brighter in the girl's eyes as she stared.

"I knew crossing the Plains had changed you," she said, half to herself, as if trying to fathom a mystery. "I knew it by that daguerreotype which I kept next to my heart. I loved it. I fell in love all over again with this new man you are." Her eyes

were full on him, beaming. "You're handsomer than I thought."

She was in his arms again, chuckling. "You aren't a bit like the gawky boy I promised to wed, at that quilting-party!"

Neal felt a tug on his arm. It was that long-boned uncle again. "You and me are having a little drink while Martha gets settled."

When the Indian *mozos* had finished lugging carpet-bags into two adjacent rooms, Neal felt himself practically hauled into one door, while the girl went into the other. Uncle Jebediah had him cornered.

"How'd you dare do it! And right in front of the whole plaza!"

Neal swallowed. "We're gamblers in this country. But how did you know?"

"How? Why, from that old dragoon you sent to meet the ship at San Pedro. What's the matter with you?"

NEAL realized that this uncle did not know the truth after all! But it would be wise to find out first what he was talking about. He wanted more information to fill in to his busted flush, so he said craftily: "The dragoon got mixed up in the message. Just what did he tell you, anyway?"

"He said you'd got in a scrap over cards, and a bunch of *caballeros* were after you."

"He got that much straight," Neal bluffed. Those men wearing the flat-brimmed hats, and watching him in the street were the *caballeros*, no doubt. "But then what?"

"We were to wait here till you could sneak out of town to Santa Barbara. But here you show yourself before the whole pueblo! Is the fight finished, or what?"

"I had the girl in my arms," Neal said, sizing up the whole situation accurately. "That's why nobody sniped me out there in the Plaza. These Spanish Californians are like that. Chivalry's their long suit."

The uncle explained that he had told the girl nothing about this ruckus. To come all this distance and then find her lover was going to be killed—that would break her heart. "But I told the Rangers to go over to Black Alley, where you're supposed to be hiding. What worries me now is, what in the Sam Hill are you going to do next?"

Neal looked toward the door of the other room.

"It's up to her."

Uncle Jebediah went to the girl's door.

"She's primping up," he said when he came back. "Let's have that drink." He opened a carpet-bag.

"Hughes' Eldorado serves the best brandy squashes in town, Uncle—at the bar."

Uncle Jebediah took the hint. "You want to tell her the set-up, alone? May be best."

Waiting for the girl to come, Neal flopped into a chair and started to day dream.

"She'll find out, sure! But when? How far can I go? I'll give my hand away when I talk about myself. But I could tell her I've forgotten my past. Life in the militia, fighting Apaches and Yumans—thirst and torture. Things I never wanted to write to her about. The Apaches worked me over, I'll tell her. She'll have to do the reminiscing and build the past up again! It's all a blank since the Indians got me—"

A *mozo* brought tortillas and wine for the señorita after her voyage, with the compliments of the hotel-keeper, Mr. John J. Hughes. The *mozo* lit more candles, but when he was gone Neal put them out. There was light enough already.

He dreamed some more. "She hasn't seen Dave Cranby since he was a gawky kid—except for his picture. But it was *my* picture. And she's studied it and learned it by heart! She'll never know by the looks of me that I'm somebody else. I'll tell her this is a woolly town—much worse than 'Frisco itself, what with bandits from Sonora stopping on the way to the mines, and stopping on the way back to the Border. No place for an unmarried woman. There's a Reverend Bland just came to town—"

He stopped dreaming. "What am I raving about! Cold-decking that kind of a girl! If I married her, I couldn't use Cranby's name!"

She was at the door.

He had been thinking how, once again, she would throw herself into his arms. But he was mistaken. Instead, she circled behind the table and stood there looking at him.

His hand steadied as he lit a *cigarillo*. But he glanced across the flame and saw her lips press together, one side of her mouth curl. Her eyes for the first time were not wide and childlike but narrow-lidded. . . .

It might have been the flare of the match lighting the sun-wrinkles at the corners of his eyes and every line of his thin, weathered face. But he doubted it. It was just that she was a woman who had once been in love with a man named Dave Cranby.

SHE leaned forward, her hands gripping the edge of the table. A hide-bottomed chair knocked back, clattering.

"I was right at first, when you crushed me in your arms! You're somebody else!"

Neal Burbadge puffed, smiling gradually. "Nobody in Alta California can tell me from Cranby even when they've seen us within a day. But a woman knows the difference after five years!"

She said, white-faced: "Where is he?"

"Hiding in the Calle de los Negros—that's Black Alley, where all the *baile* houses are."

She gasped: "Hiding! From what?"

"He'll tell you when you meet him in Santa Barbara."

"But—" She began to wring her hands. "Where's he hiding? That's all I want to know!"

"I don't know which house, and you can't go there anyway without the whole town following you. I'm afraid you're stuck here for tonight."

She wilted at this. But then her chin came up. "And you thought you would take his place for tonight! If your trick had worked!"

Neal Burbadge nodded grimly.

"All right, it didn't work. It was heaven while it lasted. You were tricked—not by me, but by that daggerrottype your lover sent you."



The girl pushed herself away. "I don't know how it is, but—you seem to be someone else!" "It's that way after five years," Neal said without batting an eye.



*The rider said:
"We have come
for the one who
murdered our
kinsman."*

now that he was the man for whom she had made this journey to California! She could see it clearly enough: If he went to jail, the real Dave Cranby could easily get out of the mess he was in.

As if she had actually been thinking of this and weighing it for good or evil, she shook her head slowly.

"No. This is another man."

"Course you'd say that!" one of the Rangers remarked indulgently.

Neal looked at him dumfounded. "You don't believe her!" he said with the first touch of excitement. "Over at Aleck Gibson's gambling-house on the Plaza there are men who know me—" He checked himself. "Look here, how is it you didn't arrest me before this? I've been in town all day."

"We were watching for you at San Pedro to meet your bride, until her uncle told us you were here in town hiding."

Neal looked down at the girl again. Two tears trickled on her dead-white cheeks. He remembered what old Uncle Jebediah had said about how far she had come and what she was to find at the end of her voyage. He gave an almost imperceptible shrug as gamblers in that town did when they put twenty slugs on the wheel-to lose—or perhaps to win.

"All right, gents, have it your own way. I'm Dave Cranby." He said to the girl without caring whether the Rangers heard or not: "If they take me to jail just for tonight, it makes a good set-up. You want your future husband to be safe. Know what I mean?"

Her eyes turned big. And in a moment she gave a lost nod. "You're taking his place—in jail?"

The Rangers looked at each other. This was cryptic talk, but what two lovers said to each other was no man's business after all. "She's still bluffing," Captain Hope said. But he looked down at the girl and added gently: "Not even kissing him good-by?"

She tossed her head. "That would be a Judas-kiss sure enough—after I just told you he's a stranger."

"But we're taking him up to Bush's adobe," the Captain said. "That's our jail here. You may as well kiss him good-by."

That last statement had an ominous sound. Even the girl looked up startled. "Good-by—you mean—" she be-

so to speak, all that long voyage like a St. Elmo's light in the rigging of her ship. Held a certain way, the face of Neal Burbadge vanished, as daguerreotypes will, leaving the negative on the copper—a sort of shadow. It was the picture not of one man but of a man and a ghost.

She looked up to the real face in front of her. "I know what you meant when you said that. All right, if it will help Dave escape," she said slowly; "I—well, it's as you advise—I am your betrothed tonight."

EVIDENTLY intending to call her uncle, she went to the door; opening it, she saw several men in red vicuña hats, blue coats and gold braid—Captain Hope's Los Angeles Rangers. "Sorry, ma'am, to bust in like this. But Cranby will be much safer in jail, where he belongs," said the leader.

"Cranby!" she exclaimed. "You want him in jail! What for?"

"Nothing much. A little gun-play. We have killings every day here."

"But whom did he kill?"

"Don't take it to heart. It was one of the Cabeza family he killed. But he's got a good case of self-defense."

Neal saw her sink to a chair, her hands listless in her lap, palms up. It would be a clever play if she admitted

Her hand went to her bodice, but her eyes stayed, glaring at him, baffled. She took the picture out and held it level with his face. "It's your picture!" She nodded to herself—then, as if coming out of a daze, asked: "Why are you here?"

"There might be a good reason. These men Dave Cranby is hiding from saw you in my arms. They're hanging around this hotel right now, no doubt, laying for me." He waited until she could grasp this.

She said vaguely: "You mean they aren't watching for Dave—now that you're here, with me?"

"Simple, isn't it? He has his chance to get out of town now without being followed. I mean if I can be a decoy. Of course," he added, "that means we've got to go on the way we started—when you thought I was the man you'd come to California to wed."

Her eyes dropped to the picture again—the picture she had followed,

gan, then burst out: "What's going to happen to him?"

The Rangers were satisfied. She had given herself away. Her sudden fright proved that this was Dave Cranby and her fiancé—no other!

"Don't worry, ma'am," the Ranger Captain tried to be consoling. "George Whitehorn is a good jailer. He'll keep your man safe."

But the girl saw that the Captain's mouth was grim. She stared with a growing feeling of panic when they took Neal Burbadge out. And then she ran to find her uncle.

ON the way up Fort Hill Neal noticed that the Rangers had surrounded him in a definite marching circle. Obviously this was not because they feared he would try a break. They did not watch him so much as the shadows over their shoulders.

"When you told her Whitehorn will keep me safe," he said, "you meant safe—from what?"

"I reckon you know, *hombre*, if you know this town," the Captain said almost confidently. "It's a hell of a town. And that Cabeza family is a big one—kinfolk as far as the Mother Sierras. They don't like gringos. A necktie-party—that's what you got to be safe from!"

Another Ranger said to the Captain: "Look, Aleck. If his bride came up and stayed at the jail with him those Cabezas might lay off. Why couldn't she sit by him all night?"

"You mean in a room with a lot of Indian horse-thieves?" But the Captain thought it over. "He's in a swell jackpot, that's sure. Maybe it's not such a bad play getting the girl. But we'll chain him to the log first."

As they marched him into the adobe, one of the Rangers went back to the Eldorado for the girl. It was obvious that she had told her Uncle Jebediah everything, for when she came up Fort Hill to the jail, the gaunt old Yankee was with her.

She saw Neal Burbadge chained to a log with a string of prisoners. Neal's chain was longer than the others so that he could sit at a barrel playing stud with a Ranger and the jailer, George Whitehorn.

The latter got up, seeing the slim starlit figure at the door. He went to her, came back. "She wants to talk to you, pilgrim." He shifted the barrel aside and it was then she saw the crossed chains on the prisoner's feet. Uncle Jebediah stayed at the door talking with the Rangers outside.

Whitehorn, the jailer, said to her: "Don't mind them Indian horse-thieves next to him, ma'am. They can't speak English. Just take your time. All the time you want." He placed a chair for her, but she stood in front of Neal.

"My uncle knows where he's hiding," she said. "You know who I—" Neal nodded.

She said: "We're going to leave town—when we think it wise. But first I want to know what's going to happen to you."

"Forget me. In the morning I'll clear myself. Out of the four hundred gamblers in this pueblo I know a few. They'll identify me. And Kit Carson's over at the Bella Union. Everybody knows him. And there's William Tecumseh Sherman—not so well known, but he's an Army lieutenant. He'll fight the whole town if I'm in trouble." He smiled at her. "What's worrying you?"

"Until then you're supposed to be —Dave Cranby?"

"Those lizards say it," he nodded to the jailer and the Ranger stacking chips. "Let 'em think it."

She put her hands on his cheeks, turning his face up. "Then this is more than a Judas-kiss," she said,

When she went out her uncle stepped from the side of the door and took her arm. "Hold it a minute. There's something happening here we didn't figure on."

The girl could not understand what he meant, for everything seemed quiet. Something had happened, yes, but not up here on the hill. It was a gunfight down on Los Angeles Street in the corral in back of the Bella Union. Cap Hope and his handful of Rangers had gone down to see what it was about. It might have been a ruse, but not likely. Such fights were common enough in that pueblo and it was the Rangers who kept the peace. At any rate they had left Fort Hill and its gallows and its jail for the moment deserted.

And that was the moment the Cabezas chose. . . .

Uncle Jebediah nodded in the direction of a horseman who had drawn up about twenty feet from the adobe.

The dark rider sat erect in a studded saddle, a black cloak draping him from shoulders to cantele. A wide-brimmed hat, tilted slightly, revealed his silver hair in the starlight.

"Call the jailer, Señor Whitehorn, so that I can palaver."

Whitehorn was at the door where he had followed the girl. "Palaver about what?"

The girl noticed ten more horsemen in the background, drifting their mounts closer. They appeared in the dim glow noiselessly except for the tinkle of a rein-chain, the champ of a silver bit.

The first rider said: "We have come for the one who murdered our kinsman."

"You're Don Cabeza!" Whitehorn exclaimed. "Well, listen, please. I can't go delivering up no prisoner.

We got him safe and he'll be tried. What more do you want? Hell, there were three of your menfolk jumped him—"

"Your *Americano* trial will not satisfy me, Señor Whitehorn. It is my affair and my law!"

"You can't do this! I'll call the town marshal. I'll call Mayor Hodges! And I got a Ranger here right now—"

"One Ranger!" Cabeza snorted. He waved his long arm. From behind the riders a crowd of Mexican ranch hands, Indian *mozos*, most of them Gabrielinos, prowled up.

Uncle Jebediah held the girl tight, feeling her sway against him. He began to chew at his tobacco like a squirrel as Don Cabeza dismounted and stalked toward them.

The Don looked down at the cringing girl. "This is the betrothed of Cranby?"

She faced him. "He's not here—the man I'm betrothed to. I've told the jailer and everybody!"

The old man said firmly: "It would be best, señorita, if you go away. We waited, hoping to do this thing when you were not in the *hombre's* arms. But we shall wait no longer."

Uncle Jebediah chewed faster. He gulped. "She's right. He's not Dave Cranby. You see the man they juggled looks just like him—his spitting image. But it's not him."

THE *caballeros* slid from their horses, with spurs ringing. The old Don shook his head. "We are not so easily fooled by such a trumped-up story. Bring the man out and we will see quickly enough who he is!"

The jailer blocked the way, twisting at his hands, but half a dozen men marched up to him. He was wise enough not to draw. But as he was elbowed out of the way, the Ranger behind him fired twice.

The shots zipped above the heads of the crowd at the door, for the Ranger had not attempted to hit anyone. It was a signal to Captain Hope and his riders down in the pueblo. But the thick adobe walls muffled the reports as well as the *mélee* that followed. Both the Ranger and Whitehorn were overpowered, and from then on the scene was of ominous quiet.

The old Don had stayed aloof from the brawl. He stood at the doorway with one of his kinsmen who thwacked leather breeches with a coiled lariat. "This will show Jacinta what happens when a girl has two lovers," he said. "One lover is killed by the other, and she loses the second at the end of a rope."

The girl's head tilted upward when she heard this. She was like a frightened animal that scents an enemy. "Lovers—Jacinta—" she murmured. "Then the fight was not over cards?"



The man with the rope, followed by three others, clanked up to the log which stretched from one end of the long room to the other. They stalked down the long line of prisoners who were chained three feet apart. They stopped in front of Neal Burbadge.

For a moment they scowled at him, then looked at each other, somewhat baffled. One said with a forced assurance: "You are—the gringo, Dave Cranby!"

"If there's any doubt about who I am," Neal said, "let the girl you call Jacinta come and look at me. A woman can tell—even after many years."

"There is no doubt," the man with the rope said. "The key to his shackles, Señor Whitehorn!"

The jailer was slumped against the wall, still dizzy from a thwack on his chin. He mumbled and swore, his head lolling. Two men held him while a third got his keys.

Neal heard the whistle of a rope spread to a small loop, felt hemp whip the side of his head. He was aware

that the girl had rushed to him as the noose settled snugly about his neck. They unchained him and dragged him to his feet.

One of the lynchers reached for her, but the white-haired Don standing at the door called out: "Do not touch the señorita. If she wants to cling to him when we drag him to the gallows, that is not our affair. But keep your hands away from her!"

NEAL BURBADGE felt two violently contrasted sensations, the tightening of the girl's arms, and the tightening of the noose. His throat was convulsed as he gasped for air, his eyes bulged. He felt a sudden numbness in his legs as he shambled and lurched. The blood pumped singing in his ears, drowning out the girl's last screaming plea, as he was hauled before the Don, who was objecting again to the girl being roughed. "This is a disgrace," he said, for the first time raising his smooth voice to a shout. "You cannot hang them both!"

"This is a disgrace," the Don said.

The girl's uncle elbowed his way through the crowd, reaching for her arm. "Martha, look now, you can't—" he began to stammer. Neal could not hear the rest, for the lariat was snubbed to a saddlehorn and the pony, trained to rope cows, kept the line taut. Neal kept his feet only because he was held by a *caballero* at each arm, supported by another behind. And in front, preventing him from crumpling to his knees, was the girl's rigid body, her face against his, cheek to cheek.

Over her shoulder Neal saw the Don's eyes glittering in their bony sockets. He could see nothing of that dark mask, for his own eyes were glassy and popping. Nor could he see the crowd of lynchers—the Cabeza kinsmen, the ranch-hands and the Indians, who were jammed around him. But he felt the heat of their bodies as if it were the heat of their murderous anger.



"You cannot hang them both!"

The slugging of blood in his heart and in his skull was as rhythmic as galloping hoofs. It was a crescendo, the likeness to hoofbeats increasing with each impact against his eardrums. Then he heard a shout. "String up this *hombre* before the Rangers come!" That sound of hoofbeats, Neal knew, meant that the Rangers were riding back from the street fight in the pueblo.

In that moment something happened which Neal could not at first believe. The Don's voice, although he was facing him and within arm's-length, came as if from the distant Sierras, rising and falling with the pumping of blood: "In this moonlight . . . this man's face, . . . Bring a lantern so I can look at him closely."

The moment stretched to an eternity before Neal felt the warmth of oil light and the smell of it close to him. Dimly he saw the Don's brows knit-

ted together. He heard the old man breathing hard. The sound mingled confusingly with his own gasps for air.

"You said a woman could tell who you are!" the Don announced in a queer voice. "So can a father!" As he said this, the old man's body relaxed, exhausted, as if he had been in a combat. He turned and grunted to his kinsmen, to the girl, to everybody:

"This is not the man who killed my son!"

THE posse of *caballeros* lined out before the Rangers reached the hilltop; the jingle of the rein-chains merged into the duller clank of chains in the jail. Digueño horse-thieves and broncho Indians stretched out to resume their sleep. When the Rangers galloped out of their moonshot dust they found that the eminent jailer of the pueblo had let his prisoner walk off unshackled and free!

There was much palavering, but the prisoner did not stay to hear it. Nor did anyone follow to molest him. No

one followed, that is to say, except the girl and her uncle.

The latter said: "Thanks for trying to help us, pilgrim."

"Since it didn't work," Neal said, "what's your next way out?"

"Dave Cranby's got to stay in hiding." Uncle Jebediah addressed the girl. "We're going back to the Eldorado. You got to wait, a long time it looks like, before you and your man can get together."

"I can wait."

Neal saw her eyes in the moonlight turned on him.

Jebediah said: "I'll see Dave tonight and warn him he can't risk trying to get to Santa Barbara, what with the Cabezas on the ride."

"And give him a message from me," she said. "Tell him that picture he sent me—I took it out every day and night of the voyage. I could see it was the picture of a reckless and generous man." Neal saw how her eyes remained fixed on him. "Tell him I still have it—close to my heart."

MY WAR with

NOT only are the Japs slow to recover from reverses, but they are slow to take advantage of new situations which favor them. Witness the case of Pearl Harbor, where the damage inflicted upon the United States Pacific Fleet was so serious that the Japs doubtless could have invaded the Hawaiian Islands or severely punished the Pacific Coast of the United States by aerial attack. Yet neither action was taken—perhaps because the Japanese did not know the real extent of the damage they had inflicted at Pearl Harbor, but more likely because their plans called for action elsewhere. Hong Kong and Corregidor were the next places on the list and that is the way it had to be, although radio broadcasts from Tokyo and reports appearing in Japanese papers during the months of December, 1941, and January, 1942, indicated that the Japs had a fair idea of the havoc they had caused on the island of Oahu.

Before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Western powers made the mistake of underestimating the Japanese; but after the Japs' death stand at Buna and on Guadalcanal, a tendency to overestimate them developed on the part of many Americans, Britons, and others. Fear was expressed that it might take years, perhaps a decade, to defeat Japan completely. Since there are times when fear, by lowering morale, can become almost as dangerous as overconfidence, the problem seems to be to place the Jap in the proper perspective.

First of all, the Jap will run, and secondly, he is a slow thinker. These two weaknesses, more than any others, will bring about his eventual defeat. But he is stubborn when cornered, and usually he is capable of completely subordinating everything else he holds dear in life—his family, his friends, and his business—to the job of being a soldier. He may not be the best soldier in the world, but he tries hard.

And to make it easier for him to discard what he has learned of civilization, he has the background of Japanese history and legend. All the fighting instinct of the ancient Japanese warrior, handed down through the centuries from one generation to another, is in his blood. There are few families in Japan today that cannot trace their origin to some ancient samurai. In addition, the Japanese of today has been trained from childhood in the science of modern warfare. Even his entertainment, his movies and plays, are based on legends or historical tales relating the deeds of warlike heroes. Though in ordinary life he may be a shoemaker, a farmer, or an office clerk, fighting is his real business and his religion.

Take the case of my tailor, a Jap named Ken Mizaki. For nine years he had made my shirts, underclothes, and some of my suits. In business he was a gentleman, polite and accommodating. Trousers were refitted without argument. Collars were reshaped and made smaller. As far as his conduct and work were concerned, he gave no cause for complaint.

When he called at my house he was always welcome to a cup of tea and a cake, and he seldom left without an order from me. He was not treated as a menial or a tradesman, but as a guest. During the Sino-Japanese hostilities of 1932, his business suffered and he fell ill. He sent his wife to my office to ask for a loan, and she got it. Later I gave her more money, and let them pay me back in trade. Mizaki announced that he was deeply grateful, and promised to help me out of a tight corner if I should ever find myself in one.

Our relations became somewhat strained during the Japanese attack on Shanghai in 1932 but that was natural.

Mizaki was loyal to the Mikado, while I made it clear to him that my sympathies were with the Chinese. However, I continued to do business with him, partly because my private pipeline into Shanghai's Little Tokyo needed all the pumps I could keep on it. Members of the staff of the Shanghai *Evening Post and Mercury* did not stand in too well with the Japanese at that time; by openly demanding on the front page that the Japs take their army and guns back home, the paper had incurred the displeasure of some high Jap officials. But in covering the news, one needs to maintain some relations even with the opposition, and Mizaki was valuable because of his membership in the Japanese Residents' Corporation, an organization that held political control over Japanese subjects living in Shanghai. Besides, I felt I could trust the tailor more than any other Jap of my acquaintance.

As it turned out in the end, Mizaki was in the pay of Mr. Suzuki. To sell a shirt he would answer a dozen questions, but most of what he had to say was propaganda from Tokyo intended to turn the Occidental in China against Generalissimo Chiang's régime.

China's new leader, according to Mizaki, was a rogue who wanted to enslave the Chinese masses. Nippon, he said, was only trying to bring prosperity to China and save the Chinese people from the machinations of those he called "the rascals at Nanking." General Tsai's Nineteenth Route Army was being made to serve Chiang's plans against its will.

This was the same brand of propaganda that most other Japanese tradesmen handed out to their Occidental customers. For their Chinese patrons, I learned in months to come, they had another line of conversation, one that was much more dangerous. To the native they preached Asia for the Asiatics and the ousting of the Westerner from the Pacific region.

Mr. Suzuki had organized his propaganda service well. Some of us may have laughed at his efforts, but they undeniably got results. Almost every merchant and every tradesman who left Japan to engage in business in the countries of Asia and the islands of the Pacific was a propaganda and espionage agent for his government.

There was nothing haphazard about Mr. Suzuki's propaganda work. He had the organization, and there was no doubting its efficiency. Its prime purpose was to create confusion; in this it succeeded. Moreover, there was definite coordination in the manner in which they spread their gossip and rumors. When Mr. Suzuki was stirring up agitation against Chiang, every Japanese merchant, every clerk, every salesman had the same hints, rumors, and reports concerning the Generalissimo to pass on to his customers. The similarity in the tales each man told was conclusive evidence of the existence of a pattern; it also made the propaganda more effective.

In Shanghai, the Japanese Club on Boone Road and the meeting hall of the Japanese Residents' Corporation were the places where the Nipponese living in the city received their instructions as to what to say and what to do. Every now and then Mizaki would telephone me to say that he could not keep an appointment to measure me for a new suit of pajamas; he had to attend a meeting of the Japanese Residents' Corporation. I could usually count on him to turn up a few days after the meeting with a new story to tell. I listened to most of what he had to say, found it interesting and valuable, and though I had to

HIGH LIGHTS of the NEW BOOKS

JAPAN

by Carroll Alcott

discount much of the information he brought me, I kept on good terms with him for a while. . . .

I kept up my friendship with Mizaki until August 14, 1937, the day of the historic Cathay and Palace Hotel bombings. The lid had blown off Sino-Japanese relations the day before, and total war had come to China. My residence at the time was in the war zone north of Soochow Creek, which runs through the center of Shanghai, and on the previous night I had been machine-gunned out of my flat in a modern apartment house on Szechuen Road. Like several other residents of the same building, I had been too complacent to move out earlier.

Though open hostilities had been expected to start in the Shanghai zone since the battle at the Marco Polo Bridge in Peiping, there was some reason for this complacency. From July 7, the day fighting started in the north, until August 13, when the Battle of Shanghai started, I had found it possible to guess what rumors were circulating about the country simply by looking out of my window in the morning and observing the flow of traffic. If thousands of farmers and their families were headed north for the rural areas, then it was peace talk. If they were going in the opposite direction, then the men on the floors of the Shanghai Stock Exchange and the gold bar market were talking war. The only thing you could be sure about when you got up in the morning was that there would be ten thousand farmers and their women and children on Szechuen Road, and many more on every other street in the vicinity.

The signs on the morning of August 12 clearly indicated that war was near. The Japs claimed that the Chinese had assassinated one of their officers. That was the tip-off. It was the alleged assassination of a Nipponese officer that had started the invasion of Manchuria. The assassination of Shinto priests was the spark that set off hostilities in Shanghai in 1932. And now another Jap officer allegedly had been slain by the Chinese. It was time to move, as the Szechuen Road area had been in the middle of every war fought in Shanghai since that city was founded.

My wife and daughter took up quarters in the Palace Hotel the morning war broke out, and although it was bombed the following day, neither of them were injured. Fortunately they got out with their clothes, the piano, the sewing machine, and of course the dog. But during that hectic period I had to work almost around the clock on Associated Press assignments and the *China Press* night desk, and I found time to salvage only a briefcase and my portable typewriter. And I got them at the risk of my life.

MAKING my way to our flat that first night of war was quite a job. I left the *China Press* offices, located near the French Concession, about two o'clock in the morning, sneaked through Japanese lines without permission, traveled a long and circuitous route through blacked-out streets, and finally reached the rear entrance of the apartment building.

Any attempt to enter the place through the front door would have been inviting death. Though the lights along other streets of the area had been shot out, Szechuen Road was well illuminated. Chinese and Japanese snipers and machine-gunners faced each other from the rooftops. And they were shooting at every shadow, everything that moved.

The moment I crossed the threshold of my darkened flat a stream of machine-gun bullets poured through one of my

two dining-room windows. It came from a Chinese position across the street. A small, narrow hallway saved me from what would have been certain death. Not a light was on in my apartment, but there was enough illumination coming through the windows to produce a slight shadow as I moved. Sharp Chinese eyes spotted it at once and their gunners opened fire.

There was only one safe room in the flat, the kitchen. It was not exposed to the street front, and I spent the rest of the morning there on the floor, using my rolled-up summer coat as a pillow. The constant clatter of rifle and machine-gun fire finally drummed my weary brain to sleep, and it was not until well after dawn that I awoke.

Crawling on my hands and knees from one room to another, making sure that my head did not appear above a windowsill, I collected my typewriter and some manuscript and notes. Then I left the building as I had entered, through the rear door, and made my way through Japanese lines and back to the safety of the Settlement areas north of Soochow Creek. . . .

Hell broke loose in Shanghai on the second afternoon of war, August 14, 1937. It started when Chinese pilots from Nanking attempted to bomb the flagship of the Japanese China Seas Fleet, the *Idzumo*, a ten-thousand-ton cruiser tied up in the Whangpoo River directly opposite the Japanese Consulate. Anti-aircraft fire from the ship not only drove the Chinese away but hit the bomb racks on one of the planes. Four 250-pound demolition bombs were loosened. Unaware of the damage to his bomb racks, and apparently frightened, the pilot turned his plane at an altitude of about fifteen hundred feet and flew over the International Settlement.

Two bombs, jarred completely loose from their fastenings, dropped on Nanking Road. One hit the Palace Hotel, the other the street. Nanking Road was packed with thousands of Chinese refugees from the nearby hinterlands, and so unexpected was the bombing that none of them had time to scatter into the shelter of nearby side-streets and buildings. When the smoke had cleared away, almost three thousand dead and wounded were piled in heaps on the pavement.

It was a bloody tangle of bodies that had been blown to bits. Heads, torsos, legs, and arms were scattered about. Men and women were blown from the street through the windows of the fifth and sixth floors of the Cathay Hotel. The lobby of the Palace Hotel across the street was filled with wounded and dying people. Just by luck, my wife and daughter were in the part of the hotel that faced the waterfront, and rooms there were not damaged.

Less than a minute later, one mile away in front of the Great World Amusement Resort on Avenue Edward VII, the thoroughfare separating the French Concession from the International Settlement, the other two bombs on the rack came loose and dropped. Approximately two thousand more dead and wounded were piled in the streets.

The exact number of casualties resulting from both bombings may never be known. There were too many mangled bodies to allow for an accurate count. But when the police had completed their job of checking those killed instantly and those who subsequently died of their wounds, it was found that the four bombs had accounted for about four thousand lives.

Even after five years I still have nightmares resulting from what I saw on Nanking Road and Avenue Edward VII. Though death in its most violent form is nothing new to me, I sometimes wake from my sleep in a cold sweat, with the moans of hundreds of dying Chinese men and

women ringing in my head. Photographed on my mind are the bleeding bodies and limbs of the dead being tossed into police vans and trucks as though they had just come out of an abattoir.

Especially vivid is the recollection of picking my rickshaw coolie out of a shop window into which he had been thrown as the bombs hit the hotel district. He was pulling me across Nanking Road on Szechuen Road, less than a block from the scene of death. Concussion tossed me from my seat and hurled me a good twenty feet through the air to the pavement. We were both badly shaken, but no more by our fall than by the devastation that lay before us.

I saw much of death that afternoon, but I faced it at even closer quarters late that night. Again I returned to my apartment in the war zone, this time looking for another suit of clothes. After the bombings I had spent several hours searching for Occidentals among the thousands of dead and wounded, and my trousers were stiff with blood. I felt that I had to return to my apartment that night, snipers and machine-gunners notwithstanding.

Getting back into the war zone was more of a task than it had been the night before. The situation on North Szechuen Road had grown considerably worse since morning. The Chinese had moved a railway gun into their Chapei yards and were taking pot shots at the Japanese Consulate on the banks of the Whangpoo. Some of the shells were falling short, landing near my own flat. Street fighting also had become more intense, and trench mortar shells were landing on Szechuen Road near the front entrance to the apartment building.

By the same winding route through back streets and alleys that I had used the night before, I managed to reach the entrance of a lane leading to the rear door of the apartment house. But there I was halted by a group of Japanese, all civilians, who had been called to patrol duty pending the arrival of regular army reinforcements. In command of the unit was my tailor Ken Mizaki.

MIZAKI'S presence bucked up my spirits considerably. He was the one Japanese of my acquaintance whom I thought I could count on to help me out of a tight spot. Recalling his promises of earlier days, I made up my mind to ask him for an escort to the rear door of the apartment building and then back through Japanese lines to the safe side of Soochow Creek.

It was a shock to discover that the mild-mannered little tailor was a total washout as a friend in time of need. Worse than that was the fact that he displayed a streak of fiendishness, and seemed to take special delight in making me just as uncomfortable as he could. It was hard to connect this tough, mean little package of dynamite with the polite and accommodating chap who had made my clothes for so many years, yet they were the same person. The quick change from civilian to military status had turned him into a ruthless man. The transformation was so complete that he even refused to recognize me.

Poking a flashlight into my face with one hand and pointing a Luger automatic at my forehead with the other, Mizaki commanded me to state my identity and the purpose of my presence in the war area. As he waved the muzzle of the Luger less than a foot away from me, I could not detect the slightest sign of recognition on his cold, fixed features. What I saw was the face of a killer, who would shoot almost anyone if he thought it was his duty or if he happened to be in the mood. I noticed that the safety catch on the pistol had been released and that Mizaki's finger was on the trigger. He was prepared to pull it at the slightest threatening movement on my part.

For a moment I forgot the terror of the afternoon, the dead on Nanking Road, and my own disheveled state. Then it suddenly occurred to me that I might look such

a bloody mess that perhaps Mizaki really had not been able to recognize me. I called him by name, but it didn't do any good at all.

"How happen you know my name?" he hissed.

I explained, claiming to be one of his good customers, and to prove the point I asked him to examine the label on the inside pocket of my coat. Ignoring the request, Mizaki ordered two of his men to place me under detention. I was then marched off through a sidestreet to Japanese landing party offices on Range Road, where I was searched by the lieutenant commander in charge. It developed that my erstwhile friend had accused me of being a spy.

Three hours elapsed before the commander reached the conclusion that my papers contained no military information of value to the Chinese, but before releasing me he forced me to sign a document relieving the Japanese authorities of any responsibility in case I should happen to stop a bullet on my way out of the war zone. At the same time he was obliging enough to instruct Mizaki to escort me to my apartment and help me reach Soochow Creek with my clothes.

The tailor soon made it apparent that he had no intention of carrying out these instructions. On the way back to my apartment he swore aloud in English, insisting that I was a spy and that the officer was a fool to give me my liberty. And when we reached the entrance of the lane leading to the rear door of my block of flats, Mizaki and his patrol party did not stop. Being in the midst of the group, I had to keep moving.

In just a few more seconds I began to feel stark fear. With every step toward bloody and embattled Szechuen Road, it became more obvious that Mizaki and his hoodlums had made up their minds to fill me with holes. They were going to commit murder, and in such a way that they could never be brought to account for it—I had signed the release relieving the Japanese of responsibility in the event of an accident.

In spite of all my protests, the patrol marched straight to Szechuen Road, where heavy fighting was in progress. I was made to walk down that thoroughfare to my home. It amounted to nothing more or less than running the gantlet between lines of Chinese and Japanese snipers, machine-gunners, and hand-grenade tossers.

Starting me off, Mizaki pointed north with his Luger and said: "No need to go back door. There is front door of your house. You go to it. We stay here."

I tried to turn back, but the Jap and his men barred the way. No doubt they would have opened fire on me themselves if I had persisted in my efforts.

Luckily, in a moment fear gave way to reason and I had the sense to hug the side of the apartment house. That saved me from the fire of Japanese snipers directly overhead, on top of my building. Some of them, of course, could have leaned over to fire downward, but this would have brought them within plain sight of the Chinese across the street.

It was apparent that if I was going to be stopped by a bullet, it would come from a Chinese gun. My life depended upon the courtesy of the Chinese soldiers—and for that courtesy I still thank them. They recognized me for an Occidental and withheld their fire until I had reached my front entrance. But I stepped inside the doorway none too soon: four bullets whistled past the door, all from the direction of the patrol party. I suspect that a disappointed Mizaki, or one of his men, was responsible for firing them.

Once again I spent a good part of the night on the kitchen floor, and it was a good thing that I did. My nerves were badly jangled, but after about thirty minutes I dozed off, to be aroused soon after daybreak by a heavy explosion very close to me. The whole flat was shaking and part of the kitchen ceiling landed on me. A few moments later I found that a trench mortar shell had gone through the bedroom window and had exploded at the

side of my bed. The entire establishment was torn up, but I did manage to salvage a couple of suits and soon was on my way back to safer parts of town, via the back door.

I returned to the apartment two weeks later to retrieve a few books and some other personal belongings. Mizaki was no longer on duty in the district, but although the firing had subsided, Szechuen Road was still far from quiet. At the Japanese lines I was stopped by a naval lieutenant who wanted to know my business. I explained.

"Perhaps you have English dictionary in your apartment?" he suggested.

I admitted that I had one.

"Ah, that is well," he said, evidently very pleased. "You give me dictionary and I give you escort."

I wanted to know why he should prize a dictionary so highly.

"Japanese officers should know better English," came the reply.

He was not fooling. Men who know the language of their potential enemies make valuable officers. Here was a lieutenant who knew what was ahead and wanted to be prepared for it. . . .

IT was my reporting of developments in Shanghai on August 13, 1938, that made Mr. Suzuki take his first definite step to bridle my broadcasts. That was just four days after my talk on the air about the nice things the Japanese Army might do to get some favorable publicity. Although this commentary had occasioned no reply from the Japs, they were very upset over my report of events in the International Settlement on the first anniversary of hostilities in the Shanghai area. On that day American marines clashed with the Japanese for the first time since Commodore Perry entered Japan, and the leathernecks won both a military and a psychological victory. The principal characters involved were several Japanese ronin; Colonel Charles F. B. Price, later a major general in command of marine forces on the Pacific Coast of the United States; and Sergeant "Slug" Marvin, one of the best fighting marines I have ever known.

On the morning of the anniversary, August 13, Japanese ronin started to spread around the International Settlement. Some had been assigned, together with Chinese gangsters, to bomb Chinese primary and secondary schools whose teachers had refused to advocate the Co-Prosperity Sphere and Asia for the Asiatics in class. Others had the job of tearing down Chinese national flags from native shop fronts and office buildings.

The Shanghai Municipal Council, years before, had ruled that since the Settlement was an international municipality, all peoples living there had the right to celebrate their own national holidays and display their own flags. But in 1938 the Japanese, disregarding the fact that the Settlement, under foreign administration, was at peace, disagreed with the Council's ruling. They took the view that since their troops had conquered the territory surrounding the foreign-controlled areas, the Chinese living within those zones should be denied the privilege of flag-waving. They decided to take matters into their own hands, usurp British and American authority, and rip down Chinese national banners and Kuomintang flags.

Soon after dawn three Japanese ronin in a car invaded the Settlement defense sector manned by the Fourth Regiment of United States Marines under the command of Colonel Price, and began to pull down Chinese flags. That was where Sergeant Marvin and his patrol of leathernecks entered the picture.

American marines were not in Shanghai to serve as policemen or engage in ordinary crime suppression work. Together with units of British soldiers, Italian marines, and the Shanghai Volunteer Corps, they were assigned to defend the Settlement against attack, revolt, anarchy, or subversive activity. Each unit had its own defense sector, and the Japanese, in violating Chinese flags, were engaging

in subversive activity in territory under American protection and were openly flaunting American authority.

Sergeant Marvin spotted the ronin just after they had ripped down a Chinese flag and had started to drive off to another shop. He ordered the car to stop, but the driver stepped on the accelerator. Before the car could get up much speed, Marvin had leaped on the running board in the face of a pistol held by one of the Japs. He grabbed the gun and ordered the man at the wheel to drive to the nearby Pootoo Road Police Station.

The three ronin, later identified as connected with the Special Service Section of the Japanese Army, refused to get out of the car when ordered to do so. Colonel Price, who had appeared by this time, took charge of the situation himself. Grabbing the men by their collars, he dragged them out one by one. He didn't even trouble to open the car but pulled them out over the tops of the doors, while admiring soldiers, British police officers, and Chinese constables watched from the sidelines. George Lacks, *China Press* photographer, got the only pictures of the incident and I spread them on the front page the next morning.

While this was going on, a patrol of Seaforth Highlanders picked up four more trouble-bent Japanese near the waterfront, and British detectives collected three other ronin and some Chinese puppet gangsters. The latter were well supplied with hand grenades and were on their way to bomb Chinese schools in the Settlement.

In accordance with extraterritoriality procedure, the Japanese taken into custody were eventually handed over to their own authorities. The Chinese were not so fortunate; they were brought before their own courts in the Settlement, tribunals under the jurisdiction of Generalissimo Chiang's government. In court they stated that they had been employed by Japanese to bomb primary schools in the city. They were working for exceedingly low wages, five dollars each for a day of throwing bombs through schoolhouse windows. But then, one could have a murder committed in Shanghai in those times for even less than that. They also declared that the bombs had been issued to them at a Japanese gendarmerie station.

What these gangsters told the court gave us, for the first time, a legal record that was definite proof of Japanese guilt in the promotion of the terrorism which was sweeping the city. Nipponese terrorists had been caught red-handed, and Mr. Suzuki's previous attempts to blame terrorism in the city on the Koreans and the Chinese became only wasted effort. For once, Mr. Suzuki's plans slipped up.

In my broadcast on the evening of August 13 I chided Suzuki for falling into a trap of his own making, and for having failed to take into account, in planning his day of terror, the United States Marines, the Seaforth Highlanders, and British detectives. When I had finished, the Jap telephoned to announce that action was being planned to prevent my broadcasts from being heard. It was not long before I found out that he was not bluffing.

A few days later letters began to arrive from foreign and Chinese listeners in both northern and southern ports of China announcing local interference with the reception of Station XMHA. This interference, or jamming, appeared on the air only during my broadcasts. Shanghai was not affected, but my audiences in Tientsin, Peiping, Chefoo, Swatow, Tsingtao, and other coastal cities complained of difficulty in hearing me above the din.

Through the use of directional finders, the interference was traced to Japanese warships anchored in the harbors of the affected ports. Orders had gone out to all vessels of the Japanese fleet in waters outside the Shanghai zone to jam my broadcasts whenever possible. Warship auxiliary transmitters were tuned to Station XMHA frequency and they went on and off the air with me. To create the

noise, Japanese sailors beat gongs, rang bells, blew horns, and operated buzzers in front of the ships' microphones.

The picture is a ludicrous one, but creating this interference was serious business for Suzuki. It didn't matter so much to him what I said to residents of Shanghai, because they had some idea of what was going on, but it was important to keep reports of Japanese skulduggery from the rest of the Orient. Often the noise on the air was terrific and my voice could scarcely be heard. . . .

IN the matter of accepting and carrying out their orders to the letter, I have known Japanese soldiers to go even further than they did in hijacking labor. Several instances of blind obedience occurred when they were looting the battle zones of Shanghai for scrap metal, soon after war had passed out of the city late in 1937.

Since the Japanese Army always attempts to live off the lands it invades, looting is almost as important to its leaders as combat. For this reason it maintains a special unit, which I mentioned in the preceding chapter, to plunder, pass counterfeit money, form puppet governments, and promote terrorism and kindred activities which the High Command may deem necessary to the successful prosecution of the war. This unit is called the Special Service Section of the Japanese Imperial Army.

Its officers usually are petty politicians and small-fry grafters chosen from civilian life and the membership rolls of the Black Dragon Society. The enlisted section, if it can properly be called that, consists largely of ronin—the ruffians of Japan, men unable to qualify for combat service but especially suited to the job of stripping a city bare of its old iron and copper. And if the order is murder, they are also capable of that.

It can hardly be considered a disgrace for an army in these days to retrieve the blasted tanks, armored cars, and twisted guns strewn about after a battle and ship them home to be turned into new weapons; but the ronin who followed Japanese combat troops into China did not confine their junk collecting to the battlefield. They roamed the thoroughfares and the byways, the city streets and the industrial areas, in their search for old iron. They took everything made of metal they could find.

Machinery in first-class condition was ripped from scores of Chinese factories which had not been damaged by either bombing or artillery fire. Some of this equipment was new and capable of many more years of productive work, yet it was torn from its mountings, broken down with sledges, and shipped to Japan as junk. The Japanese command did not seem to care; it wanted iron; and besides, every Chinese factory stripped of its tools meant another competitor to Japanese industry out of the way.

However, the ronin were so conscientious about their work that they sometimes took metals from the wrong places. They went into Little Tokyo immediately after the end of the fighting in Shanghai, and many a Japanese civilian returned from a visit to the homeland to find his house stripped of all its metal work. Like a swarm of locusts the Jap ronin would settle on a house, and when they were through there was not even a brass doorknob left. It was no concern of theirs that a friend, a Japanese subject, might own the property.

Even commanding generals had their difficulties with the ronin. Late in 1937, a gang assigned the task of collecting old brass actually stole all the doorknockers and other brassware from the offices maintained in the Kiangwan Civic Center by their commander-in-chief, General Iwane Matsui. The men responsible had been ordered to return to their command with a load of brass, and they were doing their best to obey.

This indiscretion, a Domei reporter told me later, cost them their lives.

An even worse blunder occurred one afternoon early in 1938, when I was driving along just outside the northern boundaries of the International Settlement with a small group of Americans including Shanghai Power Company officials. The latter were inspecting some of their transmitters and power transmission cables, and the tour took us into Kiangwan, where Japanese engineers were stringing several miles of new copper cable to carry electric current. It was three-inch cable and must have cost several million yen.

After spending a few moments watching the Japanese engineers string their new lines, we drove on over a hill and some three miles down the road toward Woosung. There we encountered a party of Japanese ronin, ordered to collect copper that day. They had struck what was perhaps the greatest find in their careers as junk collectors. Almost as fast as their army engineers up ahead could string the new cable, the ronin were tearing it down, cutting it up into truck lengths, and carting it away to one of the many big Japanese junk piles which dotted the Shanghai waterfront.

This may seem almost incredible, but I had the great pleasure of seeing it with my own eyes.

A few days later I heard the sequel to the episode. Chinese police constables of the Settlement force, on duty in the northern areas of the city, told me of having watched the execution of about fifty Japanese civilians before firing squads. In other words, another batch of ronin had discovered too late that Japan, after all, does have a code of ethics: It is all right for a Japanese to steal anything in invaded territory as long as it does not belong to the Japanese nation.

In spite of some ridiculous incidents, however, much credit for Japanese military success must be given to the ronin. His job is not a pleasant one, nor is he a pleasant fellow. But his looting, his willingness to plunder and do other unsavory business essential to the maintenance of the type of army run by Japan, has made it possible to keep Tokyo's war machine in operation. Nevertheless he is never mentioned when Mr. Suzuki starts singing the praises of Nippon. The ronin is one person Mr. Suzuki must keep around no matter how much he would like to forget him.

CHAPTER 18

SPY ARMY

ONE reason why Mr. Suzuki has been able to organize perhaps the most effective espionage system on earth is that he has had so much material to work with. Almost every Japanese national is a potential intelligence agent. The people, as a whole, seem to have what might be called a spy complex. It is partly the result of their educational system, for as children they are taught to keep on guard against those who may have designs against them and their leaders. One of the first songs the schoolchildren of Japan and her colonies and occupied territories learn to sing is: "Beware of the foreigner, for he is a cat."

After I became a radio commentator, my movements were kept under almost constant surveillance by scores of Nipponese who were obviously under orders. During the few weeks I lived at the Foreign Y.M.C.A. in the summer of 1938, I was shadowed as I traveled to the radio station and back. After my return to the apartment in Frenchtown, I was kept nearly surrounded by Jap agents.

A Japanese doctor and his family took the apartment below mine and gave so much attention to my comings and goings that it became routine. I must have taxed their endurance considerably, for they kept my hours, and even the Nipponese require sleep. On the other hand, years of the irregular hours that are part of newspapering in the Orient have made it possible for me to get along, when necessary, on five hours of sleep a day, or less.

Throughout my years of broadcasting in Shanghai, I maintained that average.

I worked long hours, but I derived a little comfort from knowing that a whole family of Japanese agents could not retire until I did. They were up in the morning at six o'clock to watch me leave for the studios. They were peering out of their windows when I returned shortly before midnight after my last evening newscast. They were on the job when I came home for tiffin and when I left for the *China Press* offices a couple of hours later.

From a flat in another apartment house, less than two blocks away, another Japanese group kept watch on my movements, and I was spied upon by a third family living two doors away from the radio station. Girls in a Japanese brothel half a block from the front entrance of XMHA contributed their bit to Mr. Suzuki's local intelligence by taking notes on the hours at which members of the studio staff arrived for work and left the station. One of the girls could be seen almost constantly on duty at a window, her eyes fixed on the radio station. Evidently they worked in relays, those not busy entertaining customers taking turns at the window.

HOWEVER, it was not the spying of the girls, but the proximity of the place that caused most annoyance. Japanese officers, pretending they were looking for the brothel, would rattle the closed iron grille across the front door of the studio and demand entrance. Brass plates on our door and window panels told the passer-by that a radio station was inside, and the antenna towers on the building were unmistakable; but this evidence was ignored by the Japs, who made themselves extremely disagreeable when we refused to open the door. Chinese armed guards on duty outside, too frightened to interfere, sometimes fled or withdrew across the street to stand by and watch. Then someone inside would telephone the Chengtu Road Police Station and British officers would rush over to chase the Japs away. If Jan Egebert, my own personal bodyguard, happened to be on duty, he handled the situation.

Apologies were always made. The Japs claimed that they were looking for the house of assignation next door and had made a mistake. Yet we watched them, and they seldom bothered to enter the brothel after leaving our premises.

Experience taught us that the real purpose of these visits was to obtain pictures of XMHA staff members. The Jap officers always had cameras with them, and they photographed even our Chinese guards. If an employee happened to show his face before the only front window in the office, a flashlight bulb would go off. It was obvious that they were trying to add our faces to their photograph morgue, and the picture they sought most diligently was mine.

The guards at the door had strict instructions not to permit anyone with a camera to approach the premises, and many a Chinese photographer working for the Japs had his camera smashed. Mr. Suzuki then started using Nipponese officers. This maneuver was only partially successful: although the guards were afraid to take action against the uniformed men, the latter got no pictures simply because we barricaded ourselves behind closed doors.

After a few months of this, Suzuki tried Japanese civilian photographers. They dressed themselves in Western clothes and, with small cameras concealed in their pockets, haunted the vicinity of the station for months, especially when I happened to be inside. But they, too, failed to get pictures.

Because of their clothes and the stories they told the guards—that they were calling on friends among the announcers—they actually got inside the station three times. Once I was there, and I took revenge for the seizure of my films by the Japanese at Shanhaikwan in 1936.

I was at the typewriter, pounding out the script of an evening newscast, when the Japs got through the door.

Before I knew of their presence, they had snapped my picture and were trying to crowd their way out of the door past the Chinese guards. In the rush, one of them tripped over the doorsill and fell on his face, while I managed to collar the other. Then I smashed their camera and ripped out the film. I went to bed that evening feeling pleased with myself and the world in general.

To a casual observer it would seem that Mr. Suzuki had gone to a lot of trouble just to keep me shadowed. Two capable agents could have trailed me continually, but the Jap mastermind used at least two dozen. No doubt they put in their spare time keeping tab on the movements of others, but the real reason that so many of them were on the job was that it did not cost much in real cash. Mr. Suzuki's espionage system encircles the globe, but he is a frugal person and he utilizes as much free help as he can get.

The doctor and his wife in the apartment below me, the family down the street, and the girls in the brothel had their own means of support. Their spying talents they devoted to Japan's cause for nothing. That was Mr. Suzuki's method—to put most of the Japanese nation to work on matters of intelligence, largely on a volunteer basis.

The fisherman in the Pacific lived off the sale of his catches, but he performed invaluable service in taking soundings of island coastlines. In the case of the Aleutians his work was so efficient that Tokyo learned more about those islands than we, the American owners, knew ourselves. The tourist traveled abroad, largely at his own expense, but he obtained military data in the countries he visited and turned it over to his government.

Mr. Suzuki thus received great masses of material concerning the countries his armies intended to invade. True, much of it was badly prepared and worthless, but there was so much that when it was properly coordinated the Jap had all the detailed information he was after. He had complete data on the terrain of China, the Philippines, Malaya, Java, and other lands that were subsequently invaded, and it was available for careful study and planning long before the Japanese Army went into action.

Suzuki usually had so much material that he couldn't miss finding what he needed, but in my case he failed to get an easily recognizable photograph. Only this saved me from being kidnaped and probably tortured.

By the middle of January, 1940, my comments on the unsavory conditions which followed the Japanese Army into the Yangtse Delta had so aroused Mr. Suzuki's ire that he decided to use strong-arm methods in an effort to silence me.

He assigned a trio of his uniformed musclemen to the task of abducting me. They had no intention of killing me, I was told later by Domei newsmen; all Mr. Suzuki really wanted to do was "teach me a lesson." He expected to do that by breaking one of my arms and perhaps a leg, they said. There was to be no real rough stuff, such as running a bayonet through me or taking off my head.

THE scene of attempted kidnaping was Race Course Road and the time about nine o'clock the night of January 12. I was in a rickshaw on my way to the studio for a late newscast. It was dark, and the street was badly lighted. Suddenly, with no warning, a car bearing three Japanese in military uniform appeared from behind me, swung across the street, and blocked the path of my rickshaw. My puller, Wang, was so frightened that he dropped the shafts, hustled up a nearby alley, and headed for home. I pitched forward onto the pavement, landing on my face.

I did not quite realize what was happening until I started to get to my feet, and then the Japanese had me cornered and the biggest of the trio was using ju-jitsu on

my right arm. I knew then that I was in for a tough time, and I can't deny that I was frightened. But the first shock of fear passed and I came to my wits.

It took only a few seconds to survey the scene. One Japanese, the chauffeur, had remained in the car, obviously for the purpose of making a quick getaway. His eyes were glued to the street ahead, watching for a British or Sikh policeman. The motor was running and he was ready to warn his comrades.

The other two Japs were after me. One was a ju-jutsu expert, whose job was to subdue me and drag my unresisting body into the car. The third man of the party was a lieutenant, obviously in command. It was his hesitancy that eventually gave me the break I needed to make an escape.

He was not sure he had the right person, and apparently did not wish to get into trouble by abducting the wrong one. For all he knew, I might have been a British or American consular official. With the aid of a flashlight the lieutenant sought to identify me, peering alternately into my face and at what I gathered was a photograph of me. He kept up a constant hissing in limited English.

"You are Carroll Alcott, the radio journalist? I think so. You will come with us."

He repeated this three or four times, but I admitted nothing. Then he shoved the picture he was holding in front of my eyes and again turned his flashlight into my face.

"This is picture of you. I think so."

He was right about that, but after a second glance at the photograph I could understand his hesitation. It was an old snapshot taken years before, and not much of a likeness. I couldn't imagine how it had come into the possession of the Japanese.

The lieutenant, however, made up his mind that I was the right party. "So sorry, but you must come with us. Much better not to resist. Please to get in motorcar," he commanded.

But I did resist. It was not what would be called good sportsmanship, but it was effective. I asked the officer to let me have another look at the picture, and he obliged, coming close enough for me to kick him in the groin. It was a well-placed boot, and with a howl he doubled up. Surprised at this sudden display of fight on my part, the thug tugging at my right arm relaxed his fingers just long enough for me to wrench myself free.

On my own again, my first impulse was to run. Then I realized that if I ran I would be shot. The ju-jutsu expert was still on his feet, and I thought I saw his right arm move toward the butt of the pistol he carried at his side. My two-hundred-pound body moved with more speed than I had imagined it capable of, even under desperate circumstances. My right arm was useless because of the twisting and jerking it had just received, but the left was in good shape. I used it.

When I took to my heels a few seconds later, two Japanese were sprawled on the pavement. The lieutenant was still moaning over his kick, and the strong-arm man had been put out of action by a left to the abdomen. I had not delivered anything like a knockout blow, but it did have enough steam behind it to knock the fellow over. Before he could get to his feet I was on my way down the dark alley through which Wang had escaped.

FIVE minutes later I was safe in the radio station, and English-speaking people in the Orient got their news of world affairs that evening as usual. But it was the last time I ventured into a Shanghai street without an armed guard. I had been careless that evening and had given my bodyguard the night off, since he worked long hours and was without relief. The next day another body-

guard was added to my staff, and the two worked in relays. Soon I had three bodyguards, since the police insisted I keep two men with me while traveling between the radio station, my office, and my home.

I did not like to believe that the attempt to kidnap me was the beginning of the end of a long career as a newspaperman in the most cosmopolitan and colorful city on earth. As it turned out, I did manage to continue against Japanese pressure, but the signs were clear. The Nipponese were no longer trying to hide the fact that they were the bad boys of Asia; they were going to become really tough toward all opposition.

The kidnaping incident drove me to take refuge behind bulletproof glass while traveling the streets. I bought a new car and had the ordinary glass windows taken out and bulletproof glass substituted. Even this did not provide complete protection, since the body of the car was not made of heavy steel, but it was good advertising. It warned gunmen that their chances of assassinating me by firing at my car were greatly reduced. And inside the automobile I had an arsenal. Egebert, who was with me constantly when I was on the streets, carried a tommy-gun; my chauffeur was armed; and my Chinese bodyguard and I carried automatics. We made quite an impressive squad.

Another result of the attempted kidnaping was my subsequent appearance in a bulletproof vest. This also was a Settlement police idea, and for a time it seemed like a good one. But no vests of light steel or chain mail were available in Shanghai, so I had to wear the heavy, old-fashioned kind. It weighed about forty pounds, and after a while I gave it up.

It was not until the day after Mr. Suzuki's men had attacked me that I solved the mystery of the snapshot. All the Japs' efforts to photograph me had failed, I thought. Their cameramen had been chased away from the radio station and I had been unusually careful to avoid placing myself in a position where a candid snapshot could be taken of me. My Japanese neighbor had tried photographing me, but if he got any pictures they were only of my back. On several occasions the Japanese Intelligence had attempted to purchase from Chinese photographers pictures of Americans and Britons in China whom they considered public enemies; they had offered as much as a thousand dollars for a picture of me, but had had no luck simply because during all my years in China I had not posed for any of the regular photographers.

Finally I managed to revive dimmed memories of the Philippines. I remembered the Praga arms case and the Japanese naval officers who, after following me about the municipal golf course in Manila, had asked me to pose for their camera. And I had felt flattered enough to oblige. . . . That was where Mr. Suzuki's snapshot had come from.

This sudden recollection of an incident of long ago and its implications came as quite a surprise. Though most of us living in the Orient knew that Japan sent her photographers, in the guise of tourists, sailors, and traders, literally to the ends of the earth to photograph military objectives, it was hard to believe that they had been cataloguing individuals for future reference in the same manner. It seemed incredible, but my own case was proof that they had been doing just that.

It is one thing for the intelligence service of a nation to build up a file of photographs of the leading military and naval men, diplomats, statesmen, and potential or real spies of other countries; but it is quite another matter to include the small fry. And when the Japs photographed me in Manila I had no real standing in the foreign communities of the Orient. The mere fact that I was a journalist, however, classified me in the Nipponese mind as a paid agent in the employ of a foreign power. This is the only possible explanation of the incident on the Intramuros golf course and the photograph that turned up in Shanghai.

My case was not an isolated incident, either. Mr. Suzuki gave newsmen his special attention, but he was suspicious of most foreigners in China. He made a business of collecting the pictures of Occidental officials, business leaders, and even missionaries in the country. It was a simple matter to send cameramen posing as news photographers to the docks to photograph new arrivals from the Occident, and when this method failed some of the commercial photographers in Far Eastern cities could be bribed to sell either negatives or prints.

Though the earnestness displayed by the Japanese in their efforts to photograph almost everything they saw may seem trivial, global war has revealed its great importance. Photographs or snapshots taken by travelers have been used by both the Axis and the United Nations, and they have revealed many primary military objectives. Commando raids and a number of major aerial actions have depended for much of their success on this sort of photographic aid. To obtain such pictures, bureaus in Britain and the United States have made repeated calls upon the travelers among their citizens for snapshots taken on visits to Japan and other enemy countries or occupied territories.

It is common knowledge that for years almost every Jap who left his homeland carried a camera with him. It was not just a desire to take pictures that induced him to devote so much of his time to photography abroad—it was the traditional Japanese spy complex. I have seen Japs in the Philippines, in China, in Hong Kong, and in Malaya; they were forever taking pictures, and the authorities made no special effort to restrict their movements. But when foreigners visited Japan or its territories and started to use their cameras, Japanese police and government officials raised a prohibiting hand.

From a Korean clerk in a Japanese camera supply house in Shanghai I obtained a more complete story of the use Japanese espionage made of photography. I entered the place to buy some flash bulbs one afternoon and noticed a group of Japanese students from Waseda University buying film. They left the premises without paying for their purchases—they just gave their names to the clerk and were given the films.

SINCE they were tourists and their boat was scheduled to leave for Hong Kong in three or four days, it seemed unusual that they should be granted charge account privileges.

I had been on friendly terms with the Korean clerk for some years, and I asked for an explanation. He did not appear to feel that he was giving away any great military secret when he told me that the bill for the film would be paid by the Japanese Government. He was not quite sure just what branch it was that would send the check, but he thought it was the War Office. When the students returned home, he added, their negatives would be handed over to the police for examination. Those not wanted would be returned, but for future reference the names of the men who had taken the pictures would be kept on file.

This shows how simple the procedure was. Japanese students, naval and military cadets, sailors and others who went abroad and who couldn't afford to pay for large quantities of film out of their own pockets were supplied by the government and were instructed to take pictures. Through their efforts and the voluntary assistance of more well-to-do travelers, Japan obtained a blanket photographic coverage of foreign countries. Much of the material submitted, like the data obtained from the thousands of Jap amateur spies, had little value; but from tens of thousands of snapshots, hundreds gave information that could be used.

In addition to the amateurs, Mr. Suzuki kept a good many professional cameramen on the job. The tourists stuck to the cities and the beaten paths, but the experts roamed into far-away and forbidden places. The most efficient of the Jap photographic organizations was the Atsu

Syndicate, which had its offices in Mukden and Shanghai and sent cameramen all over eastern Asia. At one time it had more than 150 photographers on its staff, a preponderant number for a syndicate operated as a commercial concern specializing in pictures of native scenes of the countries of Asia.

Some of the professional Japanese photographers had an exceedingly commercial point of view. As patriotic citizens they turned over negatives of military importance to their government, but tried to do business on the side with those which had market value and were not of great value to Mr. Suzuki. Photographic goods stores did a bustling trade in pictures of battle scenes of the Shanghai hostilities of 1932 and 1937. They not only capitalized on the destruction their armies had caused, but did not hesitate to peddle pictures of atrocities committed by their own troops.

Many of the pictures of Japanese atrocities which have appeared in American publications were taken either by Jap soldiers themselves or by Jap photographers. Nearly all the photographs of this type that I purchased in Shanghai were sold to me by ronin working for Jap photographers. Pictures of Japanese troops swinging their swords on the necks of kneeling Chinese, or aiming pistols at the backs of bound captives, were taken by the Japanese themselves. No one else could have photographed such acts, because Chinese and foreigners with cameras were never allowed to get within a mile of executions.

It was vanity that caused the Jap soldier to pose with his sword over the head of some helpless Chinese. From his point of view, it was almost necessity.

According to Japanese tradition, the *katana* (sword) is not a weapon to be hung on the walls of the home as a decoration unless it has seen much active service. On the contrary, when the Japanese youth is handed his sword he is reminded throughout the accompanying ceremony that the purpose of the blade is to draw the blood of an enemy. This accounts for his eagerness to engage in *kenjutsu* (swordplay) when he gets into battle. To save face at home he finds it necessary to whack off heads or run men through the body. Once he had to depend on his own or his comrades' word to prove to the home folks that he had given his sword a blood bath, but now pictures of him in action can be sent home to show that he is a great warrior.

Frequently Japanese photographers moved through the battle zones or behind them where captives were held and took such pictures, charging the soldiers for their services. In most cases, however, the soldiers carried their own cameras and took their films to Japanese camera shops for developing and printing. The shops made negatives and prints, then ran off more prints and put them on sale.

The Japanese command made no effort to stop this practice until the pictures started appearing as anti-Japanese propaganda. This was a different matter, and orders were issued to stop the sale of such photos immediately. Photographers, military or civil, who disobeyed were threatened with drastic punishment, and the officials went a step further and interfered with a Japanese tradition by forbidding soldiers to take such pictures.

MY inclusion in Mr. Suzuki's public roll call of undesirables caused no great change in my daily routine. By this time I had become so accustomed to threats, real attacks, and interference with my broadcasts that the list was merely another annoyance. The police insisted that I start wearing my bulletproof vest again, but after a month or so I put the thing in a closet and left it there until my departure from China.

As it happened, only a few days later my guards potted two hired Chinese gunmen who had been sent to the radio station to take a shot at me as I arrived for a morning

broadcast. My Japanese neighbors on the floor below had evidently informed Mr. Suzuki that I was going around without my armor again.

One of the men was killed and the other wounded. The wounded man, after firing a couple of shots as my car turned onto Race Course Road from Weihaiwei Road, got away, leaving a trail of blood behind him. At first I thought the two were robbers, but all doubt as to their purpose was cleared up a few hours later when representatives of Puppet Wang Ching-wei approached the manager of XMHA and myself with an offer—they would protect me from assassins, they said, for ten thousand dollars. I not only refused to answer them, but I continued to travel in the Settlement without my steel vest.

Japanese activity against me quieted down for a few months after the shooting in front of the radio station. Undoubtedly, one of the reasons was the loss of face sustained by the Wang Ching-wei clique. One of their men had been killed, another wounded, and the effort to get me had failed.

Perhaps another reason was that I received numerous offers from my radio fans to form a vigilante committee to augment my force of bodyguards. Already weary of the restrictions imposed upon my movements by police warnings and conditions in the city, I rejected these suggestions; but the fact that offers of voluntary support had been made must have become known to the opposition. For several weeks I even received fewer threatening letters than usual, although my radio policies remained unchanged. Evidently Mr. Suzuki realized that my assassination might get him into grave difficulties. At any rate, the Nipponese side of Soochow Creek gave me a breathing spell for a few weeks.

Another offer of protection came from Chungking, I am proud to say. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek sent me a personal note of encouragement, as he had to the others on Mr. Suzuki's death list. I also received calls from Chinese guerrilla leaders who had sneaked through the Japanese lines and come into the Settlement to see me. Together with other Chinese, including local leaders of the Kuomintang, they brought offers of armed assistance, which I had to turn down. It seemed to me that an escort of pro-Chiang gunmen would be an open invitation to a real showdown shooting. I learned later, however, that the Chinese guerrillas did shadow me and give me protection whether I wanted it or not. . . .

IT was with the Italian side of the Axis that I had my next serious trouble. The Fascisti Shanghai went into conference in March, 1941, and voted to kill me.

The war of the Axis versus Democracy was then being bitterly waged in the city, not with tanks, bombs, and artillery, but with barrages of radio chatter from more than a dozen stations and in as many languages. It had been going on since the outbreak of the European war. Because of its international character, Shanghai had become the radio propaganda center of the Far East. Every member of the Axis was represented by at least one radio station. The British also had one. The United States had two: XMHA, Harkson's station, and XMHC, a subsidiary of the *Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury*.

The British XCDN broadcast news programs in a dozen languages. So did the German XGRS. Herbert Moy, an American-born and American-educated Chinese, was chief newscaster for the Nazis. The city also had a "Lord Haw Haw," an alleged Englishman who called himself Reginald Hollingsworth. Don Chisholm, who became the American "Haw Haw" in Shanghai after Pearl Harbor, was still the independent publisher of a small shopping weekly in those days. It was not until America entered the war in the Pacific that he went to XMHA, which was seized

by the Japanese, to take my old schedules on the air and broadcast Japanese propaganda.

My clash with the Fascist element in Shanghai was partially due to my reports of General Sir Archibald Wavell's first offensive against the Italian armies in Libya. I marveled at the endurance of the Fascist troops. They could run almost as fast and as far as the Chinese rickshaw coolies without pausing for a second wind.

That wasn't all, however. The comment that finally incited the local Black Shirts to liquidate me was my version of the origin of the name Mussolini. I quoted the sixth chapter of *The Travels of Marco Polo*, in which the explorer describes his visit to Mosul, in Irak. The Jewish merchants of the city, he says, were called "Mosullini." I expressed the opinion that the modern Mussolini was probably a corruption of the name used to designate the old Jews of Mosul, and added that if Il Duce wanted to visit the home of his ancestors he would probably have to go to Bagdad and take a camel.

The Fascist community of the city, numbering about fifteen hundred Italians, was furious. The rest of the Orient snickered, and I received more than a thousand requests from the cities of the East, from Singapore to Tientsin, for a repetition of the broadcast. I obliged, and it was after this second alleged insult that the Fascisti Shanghai called the emergency meeting at which they voted to assassinate me. The attempt was made on the night of March 17, 1941.

DURING the preceding two weeks I received a flood of threatening letters, all announcing that I was to be the victim of a Fascisti killing. Each letter was typewritten, and the same typewriter had been used for all. Four nights before the attempted assassination, British detectives warned me that a car filled with Italians had been following me home. The ownership of the machine had been traced to an Italian tailor in the city. Officials of the British Embassy also warned me to expect an attack, and Chinese guerrilla officers called at my office to tell me what was up. Everybody seemed to know what the Fascists were planning; it was almost as bad as hearing yourself sentenced to death, except that by now it was something of an old story to me.

The attempted assassination ended in both failure and comedy. On the supposedly fatal night I left the radio station about 10:45 p.m., after my last evening broadcast, and was followed by the car which the British detectives had spotted a few nights before. To make sure that we were being followed, I ordered Tony, my chauffeur, to drive slowly through several sidestreets and alleys in going home. The car behind us never left our trail, and once it came close enough for me to get a look at some of the passengers. There were six men in it, four sailors and two civilians.

After riding through Settlement and French Concession streets for more than an hour, I decided that there was no escaping and that we were in for some shooting. I told Tony to head for home, and to back the car across the street, blocking it off, just as soon as we reached the apartment building.

Tony carried out the instructions perfectly; in a few seconds he had blocked the street so that the Italian car could not pass on either side. He and I took up positions back of the hood of my car, from which vantage point we could fire directly into the Italian car if its occupants were so foolish as to shoot first. Their immediate problem, however, was to avoid a bad wreck. Their driver swerved his machine onto the sidewalk, sideswiped an electric power transmission pole, and crashed into a board fence. When it came to a stop, the car was still in running condition and its engine was turning over, but the Fascists jumped out of it and started to run. I noticed that they carried guns, but by this time they seemed to have forgotten that they were out to shoot me. They dashed up

the street and turned the corner, while one of my guards fired a shot into the air. Two other shots were fired, but they did not come from our guns. Three or four Chinese, members of guerrilla bands from outside the city, had been standing by to help me if things got too hot.

The next morning I sent a protest to the Italian Consulate General. On my radio program I openly accused the Fascist leader Riggio of plotting my assassination, adding that if he was not guilty of the charge he was free to have me taken before the United States Court for China on charges of criminal libel. Riggio did not accept the challenge, but he and two brother Fascists did appear in court—to answer charges of attempting to murder me.

I had nothing to do with bringing this action; it was entirely an Italian affair. It developed that the Italian community of the city was divided on the subject of the Axis, Fascism, and Mussolini. In fact, I found that I even had some friends among the Italians, for they made the charges against Riggio on their own account. It was their claim that the Fascists of the city had brought disgrace on the other Italians by their wild actions.

I knew nothing about this until Judge Rapex, head of the Italian consular court, petitioned me through Lockhart, the American consul general, to appear in his tribunal to testify against the Fascist party leaders in Shanghai. I told Lockhart that I would not appear, but I did agree to answer in writing any questions Rapex might wish to send.

He submitted several questions, all matters of identification. The trial, which was held behind closed doors, developed into a farce. It lasted for more than a month, but ended in nothing more than a reprimand for the defendants. Judge Rapex could do little else, for even the Italian consul general, a rabid Fascist named Muto, was involved. After the trial one of the would-be murderers took a trip out of town, and wherever they were, I never saw the other two again.

My last few months in Shanghai were peaceful, and even dull. Mr. Suzuki wrote a few threatening letters, German newscasters and commentators kept up a verbal fight with me, and the Chinese puppets confined their agitation against my activities to words. . . .

MY purpose in returning to the United States was to sell Washington on the idea of backing a powerful radio station somewhere in the Orient . . . in order to counteract Japanese propaganda against us. America was the only country of importance not officially represented in the Far East by such a station. The British, for example, had stations at Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore, but all the American stations were commercial ones and their operation as potential counteragents to Japanese propaganda naturally was restricted. Though my sponsors did not dictate policy, they could have done so, and this ever-present possibility was enough to make me to feel that America needed official representation in the Far East.

I left Shanghai on the *President Harrison*, making the last Pacific crossing on that ship, which was seized by the Japanese on its return trip. And even then, I almost failed to make the trip—although Mr. Suzuki had not interfered with my broadcasts for several months, he had not forgotten me. He had two agents planted in my cabin on the *Harrison*. This time it was no polite visit, either; they were there to take me off the boat.

Rear Admiral William Glassford, then commander of the Yangtze River Patrol of the United States Navy, apparently had imagined that something like this might happen. He had previously suggested that I use his barge to make the trip down the Whangpoo to the docks skirting Japanese-controlled territory where the *Harrison* was tied up. I took his advice and was escorted to the ship by a group of American marines.

Leaving the barge, I went aboard and entered my cabin, which I was to share with Herman Young, head of the

American Chamber of Commerce at Tientsin. Herman had not yet come aboard, but two Japs in civilian clothes were in the cabin waiting for me. They called me by name and asked me to go ashore with them. In case I refused, they both had guns handy. I was unarmed, having only that morning returned my automatic to the Fourth Marines, from whom I had borrowed it. It looked as if I might be in a spot, but I insisted that since the *Harrison* was American the Japs could not make me leave it. They shoved their guns at me and insisted that they could, since the ship was tied up to a dock in a Japanese-controlled area. While I was wondering what to say next, there was a knock on the door and my marine escort walked in. The two Japs hastily decided that the odds were against them and left the boat. If they went for reinforcements, they didn't return quickly enough, for half an hour later the *Harrison* sailed, and I was on my way to the United States.

THE reader who has stayed with this narrative to its end will probably not need to have its meaning underlined.

And yet, obvious as the Japanese program is, and overwhelming though the evidence which points to it may be, there seems to be some confusion in our minds as to what we should think and do about the facts. Probably that is due to Japan's remoteness from the majority of Americans, and to the military decision to try to defeat Germany first. This confusion is more dangerous to the future of the world than any other, perhaps, which we could maintain. Cato the Elder, whenever the subject of Rome's arch-enemy Carthage was being debated in the Roman senate, used to declare at the end of every speech, *Carthago delenda est*—Carthage must be destroyed. And when the Romans won, they did destroy Carthage, utterly. There were no more Carthaginian wars after that. The solution of the Japanese problem is equally simple and direct. Japan must be destroyed.

Only the complete destruction of the present Japanese Empire will remove its threat to the future structure of world peace. It is a waste of time to think of "converting" the existing Japanese structure into a peaceable nation. What must be done is to reduce Japan to the status she enjoyed before her facility at imitating other people's inventions and techniques, and her astonishing biological fertility, made her into a world menace.

There are eighty million Japanese, and every day, every hour there are more of them. The invasion flotilla of fifteen thousand men which our air forces recently destroyed in the Bismarck Sea represented no net loss in Japanese manpower. More young Japanese became of military age that week than were lost at sea. This book is no argument for the physical extermination of any Japanese beyond those whom we shall have to execute for their war guilt, in whatever manner we may deal with similar characters in the ranks of our other enemies. The actual extermination of an entire people by war has never been achieved in the course of history. And it cannot be denied that the mere slaughter of eighty million people would be a moral crime of unthinkable proportions.

It would be equally unthinkable and criminal not to take every step to insure Japan's being finished as a world power for good and all. After the last war the Allies took some fairly drastic steps to try to prevent any recurrence of the German dream to overrun Europe. At the end of twenty years the Germans were stronger and more resolved on conquest than ever. In dealing with Japan, we shall have to remember, all the time, that what we are trying to put an end to is nothing short of a deliberate and calculated plan to bring the entire world under Japanese domination, military and economic. . . .



Flags of our Fathers—XIV

by H. BEDFORD-JONES

Pete stopped short. "Don't shoot. Friends—white men," he said.

WHEN I give you the facts about that Injun fight over in Indiana territory, considerable will be known that hasn't been known before, or my name's not Ben Dartle! Every man who had a hand in that savage mess at the Prophet's Town was the hero of it by his own tell, from the General down to the cooks. Only two men know the real story.

Pete Jenks was the real hero of that fight at Tippecanoe. That's where us Kentuckians got the blue grass from, remember? The militiamen fetched home some of it, and in Kentucky it just took hold like blazes, only the folks don't like to admit it came from Indiana.

I expect some of you remember Pete Jenks. He had a terrible hate for all Injuns, and had a string of scalps a yard wide, but he got them honest. He wasn't the kind to get a friendly Injun drunk and then scalp him, like these flatboatmen do. Now that Pete's dead—he was killed last year down in the Creek country—it won't do any

hurt to tell the truth about that fight of ours.

First I heard about the campaign, I was out one day barking squirrels. They were mighty fat that fall over on our Kentucky side, and I was courting Sarah then and aiming to make her a fine blanket. I was out in the woods a little way from my cabin and clearing, knocking them off the limbs, when all of a sudden I heard a voice.

"Hi, Ben Dartle! You might be old Boone hisself, the way you blister bellies and make bark fly!"

There stood Pete Jenks, in his Injun moccasins and leggins, greasy hunting shirt and red-fox cap. He laughed without making a sound at my surprise. The laugh pushed up the Adam's apple in his scrawny throat but didn't get past it. Nary a sound. That was Pete all over.

"I reckon to save the hides," I said. "They're right fine and soft, to make a blanket from."

"Shucks! Too much work for small account, when there's coons and foxes and other sizable varmint," said Pete. He raised his rifle, squinted, touched off, and down whirled a squirrel into the brown leaves sixty paces from us.

He grinned, with a glimmer of horse teeth. "I gener'ly shoot 'em in the eye, Ben. Thinkin' to pick him up?"

"No. I was thinking that last I heard of you, Pete, you were over in the Injun country—Indiana."

"Well, I was," and Pete tamped home his fresh charge carefully. "And I'm goin' there again, and right quick. And if you're minded to bark Injuns 'stead o' squirrels, you're going along of me."

This was a lengthy speech in one earnest breath, for Pete Jenks. That he was earnest about it showed in his swart leathery face, with tautened seams like those of a wrinkled, dried-out hide. The two bullet-holes in it were his black eyes, burning through, hot as the eyes of a swamp rattler.

"Hellol!" I exclaimed. "Is it Tecumseh and his crazy brother the Prophet? Is something coming of it?"

"Yep. Them hellions up on the Wabash are spreadin' a fire, sure. Del-awares from up there say it's war talk."

I stared cagerly as he reloaded with beautiful precision.

ALL that we knew, here in the Kentucky woods, was by word from travelers coming through, and by an occasional print handed along. Tecumseh the Shawnee, and his one-eyed brother called the Prophet, were talking Injun rights to all the western lands north of the Ohio.

It had started when the Miamis sold their big tract in Indiana to the United States. Tecumseh and the

The Prophet's Beans

one-eyed one squatted with a big village of Shawnees on the land, claiming no Injuns could sell earth without the consent of all the other Injuns around. The Prophet stayed home, doing the Great Spirit hocus-pocus, claiming the whites would all be struck dead from heaven if the redskins obeyed regulations. Tecumseh journeyed about, offering the tribes choice between peace-belt and hatchet, building up a league like the Iroquois had. Injuns clear from the Great Lakes and the Mississippi traveled in to the town, to bolster up the doctrine of redskins forever.

Governor William Henry Harrison of Indiana had been holding councils with Old One-eye and Tecumseh, last I had heard, trying to argue them out of their notion.

"That ungawdly mess at the Prophet's town," observed Pete, "has got to be cleaned out of its hosstheives and vagabones, or the hull Ohio Valley'll be in a screech again. Strike 'em, and strike fust."

"Is that the talk?" I demanded. "Is that what's up?"

Pete Jenks spat, clapped the breech of his reloaded rifle to settle the priming, dropped the butt to the ground and eased himself by leaning against the prop of the long iron.

"I been over there. I was at a talk between the Gov'nor and Tecumseh and Vincennes, sometime back. A leetle more brag by that infernal Shawnee, and we'd ha' had a settlement with hatchet and ball. He same as told the Seventeen Fires, as they call us, to go to hell. Wouldn't set down on a council seat arranged for him. Made the Gov'nor go out under a tree."

"I've heard about his brag," I said. "Something about the sun being his father and the earth his mother, eh?"

A grin split Pete's leathery features.

"Nope; that's just what the interpreter said, being a polite Frenchman. The Shawnee allowed he'd plant his butt where he pleased. He and the Prophet, who calls himself Open Door but aint nothing but Open Mouth, refuse to quit their town. It's a hive of Injuns from all parts, nigh four thousand of 'em. The Prophet claims he can grow punkins big as houses and order the sun, and the Injuns with him can't be touched by bullets. We'll go see."

To my delight, Pete Jenks had become really garrulous.

"Is it an army?" I demanded. "Is the Governor going?"

"Gov'ment at Washington has told him he'd better. And high time. Troops are musterin' at Fort Knox, above Vincennes. Reg'lars and Injianny militia. I been in to see old Gen'ral Sam Wells at Louisville. He's beatin' up Kentucky volunteers and callin' out the Mounted Riflemen. Well, what say?"

"What's your talk? To join the Mounted Riflemen?"

"Hell! You jine me, and I've jined nothing. I don't need no fife and drum," Pete Jenks spat again. "When I was up for a look at that village in the spring, some copper-bottomed polecat in it stole my hoss. I had to foot it back to Vincennes, a hundred and fifty mile. The Shawnees killed your grandpap, didn't they, when he fit along of Dan'l Boone? You can bark a squirrel. I can pick out his eye. So I stopped by for you."

I NODDED as a matter of course. My grandpappy had not been with Daniel Boone; I wasn't sure whether I had had a grandpappy, in fact. That sort of talk was just a custom of Pete's.

"Heading for Vincennes?" I asked.

He nodded. "Promised the Gov'nor I'd be back for the march. He's a sojer, but he can't help that, and he knows the woods. Was with Wayne when they licked the Shawnees and the other varmints at Fallen Timbers in the British traders' country. We'll trail along and learn what vartue there is in that string o' beans Old One-eye sets store by."

"String of beans?" I frowned at him.

"Yep. That's what Prophet Big Mouth charms his Injuns with, so bullets won't touch 'em. . . . Well, you aiming to squat and gab all day?"

"Come on. I'll fill my horn and run some more bullets," I rejoined. Pete Jenks fell in behind me. I was aware of his eyes appraising me, as we paced single file toward the cabin.

"Glad you're wearing your hair proper long," he muttered. "Leave it be. Might need it that way yet."

My black hair was almost Injun length, greased for the twist of a tight tail behind, and bound with a thong, backwoods fashion.

I had no horse, and Pete had no horse; it was shank's mare for us. An hour later, with corn and dried venison in our pockets, and an extra pair of moccasins in my belt, we were on our way.

And it was a long way, without incident. When we legged it into Fort Knox of Vincennes, a hundred miles up the Wabash, all the troops had marched on into the northward, leaving a mere skeleton garrison.

Pete was not worried.

"We'll ketch 'em long afore they start the music. It'll be a plain trail. The Prophet's town is a hundred and fifty mile, at the mouth o' Tippecanoe Crick. Meaning Big Clearing. And a big clearing there'll be, I reckon."

The excitement in Vincennes had boiled down to a simmer. We separated to gather news, and met again to exchange it. The people here had pricked their flints for an attack by an Injun force from above, but the Governor with his soldiers was out on the trail and stood in the way. Tecumseh was said to be on a journey again, beating up more tribes for his league of red against white.

"That's good," and Pete Jenks nodded. "While he's full o' biggety talk, he aint strong on the fight right now, after seeing Spencer's Injianny Yaller Jackets and Daviess' dragoons with hosshair on their helmets."

"Yellow Jackets?" I queried. "Who the devil are they?"

"A passel of militia the Gov'nor's been training. You'll see when we've ketched up with the army."

"With Tecumseh gone, I hear the Prophet won't show fight."

"His Injuns will, or I don't know beans"—Pete Jenks laughed out loud. Some hidden thought had tickled his wits. "What I'm feared of, is the Gov'nor won't fight, less'n he's forced to it. That's his orders. But he's got to; condemn it all, he's got to! If we don't clean out this here Prophet's town right now, it'll be hell along the border in the spring."

We set off, following the trace up the Wabash. The stream comes down from the northeast; the trail used by Injuns and traders keeps to the east side, to cut the bends, and the troops had mainly followed this as the shorter way, while the Governor boated most supplies. The foot, horse and wagons had marched at a good gait.

Pete and I traveled cautiously, in respect for Injuns who might be hoping to cut off stragglers. Near sixty miles on, when the trail had freshened, we heard drums and a deal of other hubbub, and broke clear in sight of a brand-new log fort, in a fresh clearing overlooking the Wabash. Boats lay in the river; troops were drawn up on parade; lines of tents showed.

"Damn!" Pete Jenks shortened pace. "Thunder and blazes! If they aint stopped halfway to build a tradin' post! I'll remind Gin'ral Harrison once more that I lost me a right good hoss, and I won't swaller that from no Injun. The Shawnees killed your grandpap, too, which goes on the same docket."

WE hied on to the fort. An outpost sentry in bright yellow horseman's jacket, high stiffened blue cap with yellow bands, and blue pants with yellow stripes, bawled at us to halt. "Who comes?" says he.

"Big Thirst," answered Pete, and we went on.

Horse and foot were drawn up. A group of officers were in the open gateway. A strapping big man in dragoon's boots and helmet and full trappings, belted with a horse pistol and extra big saber, stood hoisted on a box. You could always count on Jo Daviess, as he always signed himself, United States attorney for Kentucky, to do the honors. Daviess held a bottle in one hand and was finishing off one of his speeches.

Pete Jenks quickened pace. "Looks like a celebration," he observed. Just as we trailed in, the point of the occasion came.

"In the name of the United States," orated Jo Daviess, "and by the authority of the same, I christen this Fort Harrison." He swung the bottle and smashed it over the gate. The officers waved their swords, the drums ruffled, the troops all yelled. Pete sniffed the air like a hound dog, and slacked down.

"The damned fools could ha' used water," he growled. "One thing, anyhow: the Injuns will sure fight to get a smell of that gate!"

We soon learned that General Harrison, a tall, long-faced man, had no intention of staying here. The fort was built for a garrison post in this upper Wabash country.

We hobnobbed around considerably. The General had upwards of nine hundred men. There was a detachment of regular infantry and rifles, with over twice as many militia who looked mighty smart—Indiana foot and horse soldiers, the Kentucky Mounted Riflemen of old Sam Wells the Injun-fighter, and a smattering of Kentucky volunteers.

It was a question which ranks we would join. Captain Spencer's Yellow Jackets took one eye, and the splendid horse-haired dragoons of Jo Daviess took the other. All were Injun-haters, by their talk. Pete Jenks settled the matter for us.

"Them Yaller Jackets are stingers, but I aint ready to trade my scalp for a fancy jacket in the woods. As for Daviess and his dragoons—too much Jo."

"No braver man alive, Pete."

"And none braver dead," said Pete shrewdly. "You foller him, and he'll get him a fine monyment back home, but you'll just be missed. He's too brave to be safe. You look out for your own glory so's you can go home with it. What you and me are out to do, is to get even for my hoss and your grandpappy."



mighty give you a head to use, Ben, so use it. We'll jine them scouts of Du-bois, and keep to huntin' shirt and free moccasins."

So we did. Captain Toussaint Du-bois of Vincennes was a stout little Frenchman. His scouts, including us, held the advance of the march on up

the east side of the river. But the woods were thick, and we saw nary an Injun.

Where the river turned more definitely to the northeast, the General changed over to the northwest side, the going being better there. After a time we came into a tremendous big stretch of prairie that ran off to the north without a boundary, and not an Injun in sight there, neither.

"This here is Tippecanoe, the Big Clearing," said Pete. "You can see the trees of Tippecanoe Crick yonder in the northeast. Ten mile to the Prophet's town."

So the march headed in toward the river, and next day we saw Injuns in plenty, Miamis and Shawnees, Potawatomis, Winnebagoes from the north, Sacs from the west, all scouting the timber patches in front and on both flanks. The redskins acted mighty offish, but we weren't at war, so there was no shooting, which got Pete's dander up.

Dubois tried to carry a talk from the General to the Prophet, and almost got nabbed doing it. Three Injuns came in close, and finding by his yells at them that Pete could speak Shawnee, they traded talk with him. "Ben, you pass the word back. They got a talk for the Gin'ral from Old

the cornfields lay half a mile away, on the Wabash to the southeast.

Our camp was a triangle about a hundred and fifty paces across. The Yellow Jackets had the point, while a company of regulars with the Kentucky riflemen closed off the broad opposite end. The men built big mess fires. Up there in the corner, across from the regulars, were Jo Daviess' dragoons and Jo himself, large as life, in a white blanket coat, and the flag planted where it would wave over him.

Pete snorted again in sight of him. "He went to Washington in a suit of red broadcloth so's all the folks would know him. Now he's bound the Injuns sha'n't miss anything about him either. Jo, he goes whole hog! But there won't be no fight for us, nor glory for Jo. Dummied if I like the way things are heading. I didn't

Pete Jenks grumbled and growled for a long time, while darkness flowed in from the prairie and the willows of the creek.

It was a cloudy night, at the close of the first week of November. Chilly, raw, excuse in plenty for Jo Daviess' monstrous white blanket coat. The outpost sentries were far beyond the range of the fires, and would be intolerably lonesome.

For all I could hear when I dozed off, the Prophet's town might have been sound asleep. When Pete nudged me out of my slumber, the whole camp was snoring, every man lying by his loaded gun with bayonet fixed, according to orders. The glow of a fire lifted faintly in the direction of the Prophet's town, and above the snores around me came the faint discord of Injun singing and yells. This struck me as I felt around for my rifle.

"There's a pow-wow," Pete Jenks was saying at my ear. "Come on. Leave your rifle."

"No such fool," I rejoined. "My hair's worth money to me."

"Come on! Remember your grandpaw," said Pete. "We're here on business."

I gave in. Pete Jenks was like an Injun—he never went off at a tangent without a darned good reason. I had no notion what was in his mind, but that did not matter particularly. Trailing with Pete was like that: things would happen, and you might or might not know why—but Pete knew, you bet.

A SENTRY stopped us as we went out. Word that we were scouting was sufficient.

We slipped on across the squashy prairie, and the cold wet crept up my leggings. The ground firmed, and presently we were blocked by a thicket head-high. It was the first cornfield, with the fitful night air faintly rustling the crisp leaves and husks. On the edge of it, Pete halted me. The murmur from the town was more distinct now.

"It's a pow-wow, and now's the time to get in there."

"A damned poor time, seems to me," I rejoined. "And a worse place."

"Nope. A sleepin' village is worse for prowlers. Somebody's likely to be up; dogs, too. In a crowd at night you don't get noticed. Now stand still while I fix you up a trifle."

"What you going in for anyhow?"

"Make a spoon or spile a horn," and Pete chuckled. "I didn't come all this way to make peace talk on a calumet. You neither. . . . Hold still, darn you!"

His leathery gaunt visage peered closely into mine, as though he were sniffing me over. He reached out,



The Prophet put on a good show. After getting himself worked up, he hauled out a necklace. Beans . . . Immense white beans.

One-eye, personal. Seems like the old devil wants us to keep out of them cornfields. He says we're skeering the women and brats in the town."

The General came riding up with the flag flying mighty pretty to see, and I certainly did hanker to be the man who was waving it, but I guessed it was an unsafe job just the same. There was a talk with Pete doing the interpreting. The Prophet was all for peace, so Harrison said he would camp for the night and hold a council with the Prophet next morning.

The Injuns took us to a camp ground lying clear of the cornfields. We slogged knee-deep through wet prairie to reach it, but it was high and dry—a tongue of oak land paralleling the creek, coming to a point at the south end and broadening out as it ran north. The Prophet's town and

come here to hold councils and smoke pipes."

"I dunno. The Prophet couldn't have landed us in a better spot for jumping us," I argued. "We're facing three ways and bogged in."

"Sure. He knows the Gin'ral's no fool and will be expecting him. He aint so big a fool himself," grumbled Pete. "The Prophet says he don't want a fight with the sojers; Harrison says he didn't come to start a fight. They'll hold council and palaver. Old One-eye, he'll promise to beat all hell. The Gin'ral will tell him to turn in them stolen hosses. And the lousy imp who has mine will make off with it and his scalp. According to the talk, Tecumseh left orders behind not to make any war-talk. My hoss will go, and the score for your grandpappy won't get evened up. We'll march back home again, and there you are. A hell of a war!"

jerked the buckskin tie from my hair-twist, and with a flip shook out the gather. Fumbling in his shirt, he began to stroke my face rudely; by the feel and the odor of clay, he was painting me.

"You're tanned dark as me. That's why I lected you."

He rapidly daubed his own phiz. The paint was vermilion; and even in the dark, the effect was striking. In him, I could see myself. If he was Injun enough to pass, I decided, so was I.

"Now, by gosh, if you're spoke to, grunt some gibberish. Remember, there's plenty strange Injuns yonder, collected from all over." With this, he set on through the cornfield. Our halt had taken little time. Once or twice Pete paused, to feel about. "No corn left standing. Thought we might pocket a few ears on the way back."

He sifted down the crooked rows and between the stalks, with me at his heels. Then the corn thinned out. We were at the farther edge of the great field. And here, smack before us, was the Prophet's town, just beyond a clear space. It was a prodigious clutter of houses and lodges, all shrouded in night and mystery except in one spot. A fire blazed there, the red light splitting the cloak of darkness.

The chanting and voices had ceased. A baby or two squalled away lustily. The intent silence was now ridden by a single voice, shrill and high, pitched in a sort of wild monotony. A grunt broke from Pete.

"By Gawd, that's Old One-eye himself, makin' magic!" He hesitated, and in a surge of fervent hope, I drew back. Sneaking into this town of potential enemies did not appeal to me. Better let well enough alone and get back through the cornfield.

THE dusky dark town, brooding upon the unknown, frightened me. That fire was ruddy like the heart of evil, and weighted the night with danger. Then Pete stirred.

"Good! All the better for us. Ding'd if we aint likely to manage it. Peel!" He jerked off his fox-skin cap, tucking it inside his shirt. He was going in. By that, I was going too, no matter how weak my knees.

We filed on, and got into the town outskirts without being challenged. The stink of offal hung in the air, damp with the prairie and creek and river. We slid past voiceless structures whose very smell was eloquent with warning. Bark shanties, brush huts, pole and blanket-thatched leantos—these and their like told what a conglomeration of resident and fugitive Injuns were hived in the Prophet's town.

With a swift snatch aside, Pete filched a blanket covering from a lean-to; with a dive and another snatch, he had a second from an open stall. Wrapping himself in one ragged blanket, he thrust the other upon me. How the things smelled!

At a shuffle, but with no risk of haste, he padded for the fire. And following, I had to admit that he was Injun indeed, and hoped I was as good in the rôle. The fire was now glinting redly into our very faces.

It was reflected from a hedge of other faces, staring with eyeballs fixed and glistening. It was reflected from the bark front of a large cabin, a real house. It glanced and shimmered from serried rows of sleek black heads, with blackly blanketed bodies beneath in a solid mass.

The fire was the center of a thickly rimmed circle. On the inside, warriors squatted knee to knee, elbow to elbow. On the outside stood men, women, children. All of them were tensed and poised, with ears and eyes only for the fire and the caterwauling figure there.

It was the Prophet, going full chisel, yowling away, with a calabash bowl in one set of claws and a pitchy torch in the other hand. He was in a frock of white doeskin and a crown of colored feathers. With the brass ring in

his nose and the brass rings in his ears all bobbing, and his one eye gleaming in a face where the sweat streaked the paint, he was ugly as sin. But the old rascal had an air of dignity, as though he believed in himself.

"No fight," grunted Pete under his breath, and suppressed a curse.

WE pushed smack in among the squaws, and shouldered through to a place with the standing warriors, where we could get a view of the enclosed arena. There were Injuns of more tribes than I could reckon, though I could make out quite a few: Shawnees, Potawatomis, Miamis, Weas, Sacs, Winnebagos, Kickapoos, Wyandots, Illini—and others strange to me. All once bitter enemies but now one kin, massed in a stench of sweated bodies and fevered breaths and greasy robes, and held in leash by the performance at the fire.

The Prophet put on a good show. After getting himself and his auditors worked up, he suddenly emptied the calabash on the fire. Up streamed a greenish flame, ghastly in its flickering reflection on himself and the goggling faces around. He plunged the blazing torch into the open throat of his gown and drew it out. The flame was gone, but he was not burned. No great miracle in that; he was drenched in his own stew.

Now he carefully placed the torch and calabash on a little mound, ringed about with a low willow palisade. Darting his claws into his robe, he hauled out a necklace, a double string of flat white objects—pebbles, painted wood, large wampum? Pete's elbow dug into my ribs and jarred my wits. Beans, of course. Immense white beans.

The Prophet backed away toward the cabin, holding up that string of beans and blattering in a singsong voice once more. He stood at length on the threshold of the cabin.

I heard Pete grunting an exchange of talk with a Shawnee on his left. With a stir of all the circle, man after man broke out, filed to the dangled string, gave it a squeeze of his fingers, and passed on and into the night. This was the finish of the ceremony. The circle was slowly dissolving; the squaws and children departed.

Pete sat down; I followed suit; the fire gradually died. As the game went on, the Prophet's arm grew tired. He hung the string of beads on a peg beside the doorway, croaked again at the warriors, then went into the cabin. His own house, evidently.

It took a long time for those warriors to go up and touch the beans, one by one. They were magic beans, according to the Prophet; the man who gripped them in his fist became



I saw Pete reach for the beans.

invulnerable. So every brave got a good hearty grip to make sure.

Pete's Shawnee had politely squatted with us. Pete and I sat huddled in our blankets; why we were staying here, was more than I could see, but, by the glitter in Pete's hot-coal eyes, I knew he had some deviltry up his sleeve.

The crowd thinned, died out. We were alone. The Shawnee rose and went forward, disappeared. The dulled glow of the heap of coals scarcely reached us, and the string of beans was doused by the gloom. Pete nudged me and stood up, plainly expecting me to follow as he deliberately stalked forward. So I did.

We passed along the front of the big cabin and came to the doorway. SnORES sounded inside. I saw Pete reach out for the double string of beans; instead of giving it a grip, he lifted it off the peg, and without a pause in his stride went on, stowing it under his blanket.

Out of the very ground, it seemed—or more likely, from around the corner of the cabin—sprang an Injun. That same damned Shawnee! He must have been suspicious of Pete's talk or of our actions. Now he let out a whoop of alarm.

Pete dropped his blanket, I dropped mine, and we legged it away, with moccasin and hatchet hard after us.

The Shawnee yelled again. I swear I felt his breath hot on my neck, he was so close. Another Injun jumped us on the flank. A man running pell-mell through the darkness has little choice of course. We bolted on, raising a trail of whoops and cries as we blundered among the shacks in a sort of headlong blind staggers. Somehow we got out into the clear at last, with the Shawnee panting at our heels. Pete suddenly ducked and sprang aside. I over-ran him. So did the Shawnee after me. Farther back, the second redskin was yelping as he came leaping along.

As I wheeled, there was a scuffle and a thump, and a grunty gasp. Then Pete's voice, as he loomed up and went past me, something in his hand that flecked warm blood on my face. "Run! I got him."

The second Injun, taking warning, had halted as we bolted on into the cornfield. He had too much sense to try and hunt us there.

The sky was beginning to drizzle. After a bit we came to a halt and stood heaving. I could just see Pete wipe his knife on his leather thigh. By the bedlam of sounds, the Prophet's town seemed to be swarming around like bees wanting a queen.

"Dang it!" wheezed Pete Jenks. "Didn't have time to scalp that Shawnee. Hate to leave hair like that. But you can put him to your grand-

pap's account. . . . Well, we got what we come for!"

"You crazy fool," I broke out hotly, "did you risk our scalps to get that dirty string o' beans? With it gone and a warrior killed, the Injuns will attack the camp, dead certain!"

"Yep, that's what I figger," said Pete. "Let's streak it for camp."

"Which way?"

"Out o' this corn and into the prairie. That's fust thing."

HE led on, and I could follow him by his constant chuckles. He was in a gale of good humor, powerfully tickled about something. At length we broke clear of the corn, and the prairie was dark before us. Pete began to sniff, and a taint of wood-smoke, staled by the thin drizzle, caught my nostrils.

"Smell them camp-fires—see one, too," Pete declared. Off to our left was a faint reddish glimmer. We had come out well to the north of the camp.

"Now to get back!" Pete plunged ahead on the prairie. "This'll fetch us into the oaks at the Kentucky end of camp." The confusion in our rear had quieted down, and he emitted another chuckle. "Old One-eye has lost his magic beans. What'll he do now, I wonder?"

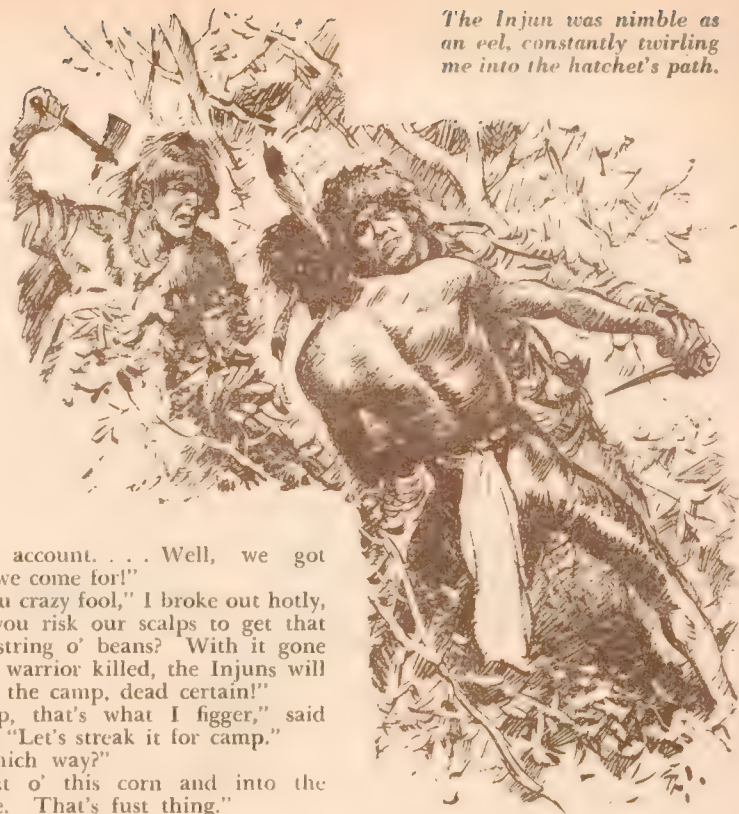
"What do you want of 'em?" I demanded.

"Results," said Pete. "We'll get 'em; you watch. I feared there wouldn't be no fight, but now I can buy every hoss in the town yonder."

"Damn this mud, and you too," I commented. "No fight? Why not?"

"Gin'ral's orders. Likewise, he agreed to a council. That Shawnee next us says there'd be no fight. Tecumseh's orders. The Prophet was makin' all the whites blind by his magic. Every Injun gripping them

The Injun was nimble as an eel, constantly twirling me into the hatchet's path.



beans couldn't be hurt. Wait, he says; wait and palaver until Tecumseh gets here with a thousand more braves. Then his magic makes us all helpless."

"If the warriors want fight, and can't be hurt, why didn't they wade into us?"

"The Winnebagoes aint so sartin about them beans. They want the Prophet to prove the magic by leading his Shawnees. The Prophet aint risking his hide, you bet; anyhow, Tecumseh ordered no fighting until he got back. Now, by gosh,"—and Pete chuckled anew—"it's a hoss of another color! Beans gone, Shawnee knifed—they'll come a-b'iling! Hold on, Ben. Put on your cap and wipe the paint off'n your face."

We halted, became white men again, and filed on, slumping through the soggy prairie mud. We climbed the quick slope of the oak bench, and faced by our best sense of direction for camp to the southward.

The broad bench was smotheringly dark, deep with silence save for the eerie drip of moisture from the oak boughs, tinkling on the dry fallen leaves. Our moccasins made a faint rustle, deadened by the dampness, but the sound was enough for watchful ears. It was a question whether we would meet first with a challenge or a rifle-shot.

*Illustrated by
L. F. Grant*



"What you got there?" I asked. "Bean soup, if you don't mind Injun flavor."

"I aint got much faith in these beans, with a Kaintuck rifle trained on me," said Pete. He whistled slightly as he advanced, like the attempted bravery of a boy alone in the haunted night. One would not have guessed that this bench harbored nearly a thousand armed men—until, far ahead of us, the upflame of a freshened fire spanned the vista among the oak trunks, and briefly limned a moving figure in a white blanket coat. Jo Daviess was on hand, bidding for action. I thought then what a shining mark that coat would make. Then, suddenly, the click of a gun-lock.

"Halt! Who comes?" The challenge held a nervous quaver. Pete stopped mighty short.

"Don't shoot. Friends—white men." "Then what you doing out there? Stand where you are; don't—"

"Hold on, Kentucky," I chipped in. "Isn't that you, Steve Mars? This is Ben Dartle. Pete Jenks is with me. We've been scouting. Hold your fire, durn you."

We went on, to the leveled bayonet and peering white face and the uneasy trigger finger of Steve Mars, from my part of Kentucky.

"I been listening to you come on," he gulped. "I was ready to shoot and

yell and run. Been seeing Injuns in every damned clump o' trees. It's lonesome out here in the timber!"

"I don't blame you for the fidgets," Pete consoled him. "Don't you worry 'bout the Injuns. They're all in town yet, where we left 'em."

"What? You been in the Prophet's town?" bleated Mars.

"Sartin. Injuns aint pickin' their flints for a fight yet. Will soon, though."

"Too bad," said Mars. "We marched up here for a fight, didn't we?"

"Oh, you aint got long to wait. You got Jo Daviess, and I lost a good hoss, which is excuse enough. Keep your eyes peeled."

ON we went, leaving Steve Mars to his lonely outpost among the black oaks.

A sentry of the inner line halted us. We were quickly passed, and entered camp through the sleeping ranks of the Kentucky riflemen. Now for a blanket, to roll up feet to fire and get some sleep; we were wet, muddy and tired. And Pete with those con-founded beans under his shirt!

We were not making any reports, you bet. Pete was snoring in no time, but I lay awake, plenty jittery. I had finally got it into my head what Pete, who hated all Injuns the way the devil hates holy water, had been up to from the start; and it made me sweat. All the camp was snoring, the regulars in their lines of tents, the General and staff in tents, the militia and scouts in their blankets. Finally I dropped off and forgot my troubles.

WHEN I wakened, Pete Jenks was shaking me, cackling in my ear: "Come on, Ben! By the 'tarnal, they've come for the beans!"

A rifle-shot cracked; then muskets banged. "Injuns! Injuns!" went up a frantic yell from all sides in a wild, rushing chorus of shouts and orders.

The northwest corner of the camp, where we had entered, was aflame with musket and rifle fire. Dawn was close; the fires had been built up, tokening reveille and roll-call close at hand. The whole camp, however, had erupted ranks as if the sound-off of Gabriel's trumpet had come.

The blankets of the Yellow Jackets here at our end were flying like a burst hornets' nest. In the flare of light the lines were already rimming the camp on all sides while horses were plunging and snorting. Orders crackled out amid a medley of oaths and cheers. Above all the clamor pealed the war-whoop of the masterful Winnebagoes.

Pete and I were running for the hard-pressed northwest corner. The General came galloping past us, breeches hastily wedged above his boots, raced by his aide, Major Owen, on a white horse. We ran slap into a regular melee.

The angle held by the company of regulars and the Kentucky riflemen was a hurly-burly of thrusting bayonets, swung muskets and rifles, greedy war-clubs, knives and hatchets, and was rifted by gunfire. Major Owen was off his white horse and down, trampled underfoot as the angle broke and the Injuns flooded in.

Next moment I was breast to breast with a reeking redskin naked to the waist. We locked, swaying and tramping while we tried to free our knife-hands, with Pete Jenks dancing in and out, his hatchet raised. The Injun was nimble as an eel, constantly twirling me into the hatchet's path.

With a final wrench, I tore from his gripped fingers and drove home. Down we fell, and I landed undermost. His knife hovered like a striking adder; his death-whoop was on his lips, when he collapsed. Pete Jenks hauled him off me, slashed rapidly, and held out the scalp.

"For your grandpappy," he said, but the scalp did not reach my hand. A

horseman crowded his beast between us, and the rider snatched up the scalp.

"None of that! You're white men." It was the General himself. Flinging the scalp into the nearest fire, he spurred on.

Pete Jenks matched the sizzle of the scalp with a more sizzling oath, then dragged me aside.

"Let t'others wrasse," said he. "You and me got rifles to use."

We used them. Now the fires were kicked apart and doused by the teamsters; but day was at hand, and the drizzly murk was thinned by a low, cloudy dawn. The attack spread like a freshet split by an island; in the gloom, an amazing rattle of dried deer-hoofs, here, there, and everywhere, rallied the warriors.

The charges came anew, were beaten back, came again. Lead hissed and hummed and spat; powder-smoke filled the lungs with its reek. The lines held, but were cluttered by crimsoned men. Death was striking fast. Pete Jenks and I did our best to help it along, our rifles hot.

"By Gawd, they aint got their beans off'n me, but I never see Injuns so crazy fighting mad," coughed Pete, as he rammed in patch and bullet.

"Damn you, it's your own fault," I snapped at him.

"Well, I want my hoss, the army wants a fight, and you want to pay for your grandpap, so work more and talk less."

BY the coming of dawn, we had somehow gravitated to the north-east corner, where the dragoons had supported the defense against the last vicious charge. The redskins favored the cover of those oaks overlooking the wet prairie.

"Here, scout! Find General Harrison. Tell him I wish to charge afoot on those Injuns in my front."

The booming voice and the white blanket coat were familiar. In the lull, Pete nodded to the speaker, and left his rifle with me.

"All right. But if you know what's best for you, you'll stay here," he flung back.

After a time he came slouching back, dog-tired and morose. Major Jo Daviess was close by, and Pete bawled out his message.

"Gin'ral sends compliments, and he'll give you a chance to make a showin' as soon as proper."

Daviess bit his lip and stalked off. Pete wrinkled up his nose and grinned.

"He's goin' to be hard to hold. When he does cut loose, I aint takin' orders from him. I stay put, and let him have the glory."

It is Kentucky tradition, how Daviess sent again to the General and

had word in return: "Major Daviess will get the chance to distinguish himself before the day is over." And sent a third time, to get another message which still smacked of irony under its polite phrasing: "The General has advised twice. Major Daviess will now use his own discretion."

It was not yet day, so hard had impatience run in hot veins. Pete and I, with rifles ready to grab and use, watched them go. The Major in his white blanket coat, leading a single file of twenty dragoons to clear the lurking redskins out of the oak-patches. I heard Pete's sarcastic grunt.

"Goin' to have a new monymint down to Louisville 'fore long."

A wildly foolish sortie, a mad and useless gesture. The white blanket coat had not glimmered out of sight, when shots and whoops burst upon the lull of battle. Back into the cover of our rifles and muskets came the booted dragoons, horsehair helmets bowed before the blast, lugging the heavy form of Jo Daviess with them.

"State of Kaintuck has lost its United States attorney," spat Pete, "but them Injuns are still on deck."

Daylight grew. The fighting welled up again, only to ebb away. Kentucky riflemen, and regulars with their bayonets, went charging through the timber and swept it of the enemy.

Bayonets and dragoon sabers cleared the prairie approaches, jumping the Injuns from the tall grasses and driving them across the willowed creek and into the cornfields and town. By six o'clock there was not a painted skin in sight, excepting the bodies in the camp and outside the lines.

However, two hundred of our nine hundred men had been killed or wounded. The Yellow Jackets, with Captain Spencer among their dead, had paid dearly for their handsome trappings. Horses were stretched stark and bloody; tents were riddled. The cornfields and the town havened an unknown muster of the enemy; a Potawatomi chief left with a broken

leg confirmed the news that Tecumseh was on his way with a thousand new warriors.

It was a miserable day, a dense drizzle filling the air. With guards well posted we threw up entrenchments, buried our dead and bandaged our wounded, and attempted to pleasure our peevish bellies with tough half-cooked horse-flesh. Other supplies were being saved for the hospital list. Everything was in confusion; all grub was scarce, and it looked as if our victory had not got us much to brag about.

I HAD been completely unable to find Pete Jenks all morning. A bit after noon, however, I came upon him. He was crouched beside a tiny cooking fire among the trees and was tending a small Injun clay pot that hung over the blaze.

"Where you been?" I demanded. His seamed dark visage lifted.

"Lookin' for my hoss. Aint there."

"Aint where?" I asked.

"Village yonder." He jerked a thumb toward the Prophet's town.

"You'd better stay out of there," I said sourly. "You've raised enough hell for one time. Durned good thing nobody knows about our scout last night. You'd better get rid of that string of beans, too, before somebody finds out."

"Reckon so myself," he grunted. "I scouted around until I could look in to the town, Ben. Not a hoss nor an Injun left there. They've skedaddled, hoof and moccasin."

"Aren't you going to report it?" I asked.

"Nope. The boys got their fight and don't like it. We got a scalp for your grandpappy, and it was took away from us. I don't get my hoss or any other. You still craving to flap 'at there flag?"

I looked over to where the flag hung wet and listless.

"Not me," I said. "I've learned sense. Some other feller can wave the flag. I'll stick to my old shooting-iron."

"Now you're talking," said Pete, and hauled out some fresh scalps he had bundled up under his shirt. "Here's the proper flag for us, Ben. You can make your woman a blanket of squirrel pelts; I'll make mine of Injun hair." He leaned forward and began to stir the contents of the pot. I sniffed, and it smelled good to an empty belly.

"What you got there, corn?" I asked.

"Nope. But it's a right good mess o' bean soup, if you don't mind an Injun flavor to it. Set and dig in."

He grinned at me, and we settled down together, to get rid of the Prophet's magic beans. And that is how the battle of Tippecanoe came about.

Solution to Crossword Puzzle on page 61

C	L	A	R	E		M	A	L	T		E	L	B	E
R	O	M	A	N		O	B	O	E		P	A	R	A
U	S	A	G	E		N	E	G	A	T	I	V	E	S
M	E	T	E	R		S	T	I	P	U	L	A	T	E
B	R	I	D	G	E	T		C	O	R	A	L		
						Y	A	R	N		T	I	T	I
D	E	F	I			C	O	O	P		N	I	E	C
O	U	R	N			H	U	M	O	R		O	R	T
G	R	A	F	T		S	A	T	E		N	E	A	T
S	E	N	L	A	C		D	E	N	I				
						C	I	T	E		N	O	I	S
P	R	E	C	E	D	E	N	T			E	N	V	O
A	U	S	T	R	A	L	I	A			L	O	I	R
R	I	C	E			R	A	N	T		D	O	N	O
K	N	A	R			S	H	O	E		S	P	E	N



"That poor girl!" said Zoe. "To think she was killed in the house where we took her! Murdered!"

MOONEY MAKES *with* MURDER

A complete book-length novel

by Kerry O'Neil

who wrote "Mooney's in a Jam"



JERRY MOONEY sat in his inner office in the Etruria Tower, smoking a cigarette and going over some mail that had accumulated during the day. The telephone rang, and he heard the voice of Mickey, his tidy little secretary:

"Miss Zoe Edleigh calling."

"Let her come through."

"About an hour ago Doctor Joe Pierce called. And I've got a notion it's about the same business."

"What is the business?"

"They didn't say. But it's something that's going to bring you grief."

Mooney laughed.

"What makes you think that?"

"That woman is beautiful," said Mickey; "also, she's got money, and goes in for things that are thrilling. And Pierce is a kind of medical boy scout: always looking for a good deed to do. A hook-up like that brings trouble."

"Trouble is my business. I'm paid for having it," said Jerry.

"You've never been paid for any they've got you into," contended Mickey. "Remember that last job you did with them? You almost paid for that in time."

"Things are always happening," said Jerry, good-humoredly.

"They mostly happen to smart saps," Mickey told him. "For a party that's been around a good bit, Mooney, you fall overboard a lot. And you know how you stand at Headquarters. That old snapper, Pash, would give anything to get you down. And he'll do it some day if you don't look out."

Jerry laughed.

"Let's give that a going-over when we have more time," he said. "Put Edleigh on, and let's see what she has on her mind."

In a few moments a beautiful voice sounded:

"Oh, Jerry, how are you?"

"Very nice," said Jerry. "Maybe a little above par."

"That's wonderful! For I've been wanting to have a talk with you. Joe has just found something interesting. I'm at the Russel-Alwyn pool. Do run in, say in the next half-hour. I'll be ready for conversation about then."

In a half-hour Jerry arrived at the pool, and just in time to see a beautiful figure split the air in a perfect dive; a

vision of blonde loveliness vanished beneath the surface. Then as Zoe Edleigh reappeared and dashed the water from her eyes with a quick flirt of her head, she saw him signal to her. In a few strong strokes she was at the edge, dripping and beautiful, and looking up at him.

"Jerry," she said, "you're wonderful!" Her beautiful teeth showed in the perfect smile that was her own. "Speed is a word full of motion, but it doesn't describe you at all. One whisper over the wire, and you are here before I can jump into my clothes."

Jerry looked down at her, at her lovely shoulders and arms, at the superb young body that came slipping out of the water like that of a young seal.

"What you have is energy," he said to her, "and that's the thing that makes speed. Speak, and you set everything into high."

She laughed at this and sat at the edge of the pool, her hands clasped about one knee. And she said:

"If you got anything that keyed you up this time, it was what I have in mind that did it. Something that Joe Pierce told me."

"What's happened?" asked Jerry.

"Something that's made me terribly angry. And it's made Joe angry too. I could tell by the sound of his voice when he called me. He said he had tried to get you at your office, and they didn't know where you were. So I said you couldn't be out all the time, and that I'd try you. We are to meet him at Moritz's at three o'clock. And he'll tell you what stirred us up."

Jerry looked at his watch.

"It's half-past two now," he said.

"I felt sure it was. But I did want a plunge before I did anything else, and I thought I'd chance it. And what a pity you can't have one. I've always liked your swimming, Jerry." She smiled at him. "I don't know any one who moves around in the water more earnestly."

MOONEY waited for her in the lounge. At length she appeared, looking tall and fair and beautiful. They took a cab and hurried toward Moritz's.

"I love that little place!" said Zoe. "The pale beer, in the slim, high glasses, and those perfect small sandwiches!"

Dr. Joseph Pierce was waiting for them: a grave, handsome young man with kind eyes and a most engaging manner. And as the three sat at one of the round tables, Zoe put a quieting hand on the young physician's arm.

"I can see you're still burning, though not as much as you were awhile ago," she said.

"No," he told her. "I suppose I do take fire pretty easily. If it weren't for that, I'd be able to think more clearly."

"Well, you've done very well. In a case like this, who would be better to think of than Jerry?"

The tall glasses of pale beer were brought, and the delicate little sandwiches for which Moritz was noted.

"You know," said the Doctor, to Mooney, "I sometimes run into things in my practice that are not nice to see or to listen to. That, maybe, is because I have made certain sorts of cases a habit. Some of them are pitiful; they would be bad enough if they were in the usual run of misfortune. But sometimes there are cases that are the result of sheer inhumanity. And those are the hardest to see."

"A few weeks ago a charitable group called my attention to a little family who lived in a couple of wretched rooms in a street down near the river. There was a mother and two children, the eldest of the children being seven years. I saw at once they were suffering from things directly caused by lack of nourishment. The name was Daniver. I asked if they had no relatives who might do something for them; and in this way found out that an uncle of the children was a rich furrier by the name of Daniver, operating under the name of Greensleeves. But I found the woman did not want him spoken to. She was sure he would do nothing for her, anyway. He had offered her help only once; and what made him do that she never quite understood."

JERRY MOONEY stirred in his chair.

"Check!" he said. "Whatever this thing is, there is the key to it. He did something once. Never before. Never afterward."

Dr. Pierce nodded.

"I made some inquiries," he said. "This man—Julius Daniver is his name—is well known. Some of the highest-priced furs sent to this fair city of Chanford pass through his hands. His business is, in a way, famous. The Greensleeves name has been connected with furs for almost a century. On my next visit to the Danivers, I spoke of this, and asked why she did not want her case laid before her prosperous relative."

"'Because he hates me,' she said. 'He hates my children. He hated his brother, who was my husband. I want nothing from him, because I've learned to hate him in return.'"

"Then I asked her what the single thing was he'd done for them. She said she was sure it wasn't an actual kindness. There were shares of stock he'd owned jointly with his brother. She knew of these, but they'd never had any value. Julius Daniver said he wanted to make a settlement of some kind, and couldn't until there was an arrangement with her. He offered her ten dollars for her interest in the matter. To her, such a sum of money was not to be refused. She signed the paper he had made out, and he gave her the money."

"She gave him the stocks?" said Jerry.

"She said she'd never had them. I asked her if she'd not asked advice in the matter. She had not; her children were hungry, and she needed the money he offered more than anything else in the world. I found the stock was Metasocwa Copper," said Joe Pierce. "This had sunk to almost nothing; but some little time ago new findings were made, and the price began to rise. Yesterday it touched forty." He looked at Mooney. "I see you are going to ask me what number of shares she sold. She got that fact from an old account book that had been her husband's. Three hundred shares."

"That," said Zoe Edleigh in a shocked voice, "would have made twelve thousand dollars! And that wretch of a man gave her an even ten dollars for them!"



HALF-HOUR after leaving Zoe Edleigh and Dr. Pierce, Jerry had walked into the bar of the Venice Café.

"Hi-yah, Phil," he said to a sandy-haired barkeeper. "How are things moving?"

"All forward, Jerry, and the boys are standing to the guns. When I get the containers back, they're always empty."

Jerry grinned and ordered a Scotch.

"Seen anything of Jimmy Spence lately?" he asked.

"Not today." The barkeeper looked at the clock. "But it's getting pretty near his time."

Jerry sipped at his drink, and looked around. There was the usual gathering of business people free for the day and about to turn homeward; and at last he saw a stout, brisk young man walk in and up to the bar. Jerry carried his glass to a place beside him.

"You're looking very fit and capable, friend," Jerry said.

"Oh, hello, Jerry," said the young man. "Come on, hide what you've got there and have a new one with me."

Jerry did this; and while he was doing it, he said:

"Trade good?"

"Just leaping out of the ground. It'd surprise you if you knew the full truth. We've got things that weren't worth a dime a bundle some time ago, and now you have to be in the large-money class to even touch them."

"It's what's known as the magic of the times," said Jerry. "Nothing turns into something, right before your eyes. And we get so used to it that we don't even give it a look."

"Aint it the truth?" said Jimmy Spence. "And we've had a lot of experiences of just that kind lately. One of the boys in the office started some talk about the people who, when a stock sinks to about nothing, get so disheartened they lift their right hands, vow never again, and tear up the certificates. These people usually, if a revival comes, think their rights went with the certificates. Which, of course, is not the case."

"So, with that thought in our minds, we began to hunt through the records for people who'd bought certificates that had gone down and then bobbed up again. We found a lot of them deep in sorrow and calling themselves names, and who whooped and gave many cheers to find they were still O.K."

"Which goes to show that there is still pleasure in the world, in spite of what some people claim."

"You can say that, and more," said Jimmy.

"I think," Jerry remarked quite casually, "you once told me Julius Daniver, the fur man, did his stock-trading in your shop."

"So he does. And you just hit on a case that's a first-rate example of what I've been saying. Daniver and his brother Simon bought a little line of Metasocwa a long time ago when it looked as if it was going some place. And when it didn't and Simon passed out, Julius put the certificates away in the attic and forgot about them. He was laughing the other day about how Simon's widow, who he said is worth a five-eight' basketful of thousand-dollar bills, and who is pretty swift in a deal, tried to outsmart him. They got talking about Metasocwa one day, and knowing it wasn't good enough to start a fire with, she offered to sell him her shares. He offered her a price, as a kind of a joke, and she took him up."

"I'll bet," Jerry said, "he laughed fit to split when the news broke that the old stuff was lifting its head again."

"He said the first thing he did was call her on the phone and kid the ears off her," chortled Jimmy Spence. "She must have been sore as hell."

Jerry bought the next drink. And in a little while he left the café. He went back to his office, which was de-

serted. He dialed a number, and in a moment or two had a reply.

"Hello, Gootch," he said. "This is Mooney."

"Oh, yes. I have not heard from you for some time past." The speech of Gootch was as precise as always and had the same slight stiffness of formation. "But maybe now, this is some business?"

"I want you to hop out tomorrow morning and get me information on Julius Daniver, proprietor of Greensleeves, furriers."

"Very well; I will do so. But do you want general information or is there something special?"

"Get me all there is. But at the same time, you can bear down on a few things. How does Daniver amuse himself? What does he spend his money on? What places does he go to when he's on the loose, if ever?"

"I think I understand," said Gootch. "His weaknesses and his strengths, you want. His disposition and his possibilities."

Jerry grinned.

"That sounds awful close to it," he said. "And when you get a bagful of news, come around to the office and spill it. Only, telephone first and make sure I'm in."

"Quite so, Mr. Mooney. I will do that," Gootch agreed.

Jerry went to his apartment fairly early that night. He went through his limbering-up exercises, bathed, put on a fresh suit of pajamas and a robe; then he sat with a light falling on a block of paper and began drawing, with a sharp pointed pen, the outlines of weird monsters. He saw something opening up before him; he drew a circle of effort and crowded it with strange beasts, each representing a particular danger. But his hand was steady as he traced the lines; his eyes were filled with the same keen relish that comes into those of a huntsman on the track of a quarry.

Finally he put down the pen, and lighted a cigarette. He sat smoking for a space; then he rubbed the end into a black smudge against the bottom of a tray, and got up. Throwing up a window and turning off the light, he got into bed.

"There'll be everything in it for me but money," he said to himself. "But I think it ought to be done, anyhow." He sat for a moment in the dark as though considering. And then he added, as he slipped down into the bed and drew up the covers: "Well, we'll see what it looks like tomorrow."

IN the morning Jerry had a shower and a brisk rub, then dressed. He called his office, and Mickey replied.

"Hello," she said. "You're stirring early."

"This might be a busy day," he said. "Give Chubby a ring and ask him to say where he can be reached during the morning."

"Uh-huh," said Mickey. "When I hear his name, I know something is stirring."

"Gootch may call; if he does, say I'll be there in an hour."

"I'll tell him."

Jerry had his breakfast at a counter in a drug-store. He walked a dozen blocks, and then entered the Hippocrates Tower, ascended to the fifth floor, and in a moment or two was closeted with Dr. Pierce. The lean, pleasant-faced young medico looked at him expectantly.

"The beagle is on the trail, I think," he said, a glimmer of humor in his eyes. "You have that expression of countenance."

"So far it's only a warm-up," said Jerry. "A kind of practice run."

He repeated the conversation he'd had the night before with Jimmy Spence. Pierce listened attentively. And at the finish he burst out:

"Well, there's no doubt about Daniver being a rascal! So she's rich, a sort of female sharper, and he paid her a

small sum—as a joke! And now is having a good laugh at her chagrin! Well—now, actually, Jerry, something should be done."

"You might get the thing into court, but not much else," said Jerry. "There's a chance you could injure him in a lawsuit. But could you do his sister-in-law any good?"

"That's so," said Pierce. "And to get some advantage for her is, after all, the principal thing."

"Suppose we keep it all open for a while. I'm having some inquiries made; they may let us in somewhere."

WHEN Jerry reached his office, Mickey handed him his letters. "Gootch called," she told him. "He said he'd be here at eleven. And I got hold of Chubby. He'll be on call at Barney's Diner between eleven and twelve."

Mooney sat down and began opening the letters.

"I knew something was commencing when you started out to see Edleigh," Mickey said jealously.

He grinned at her, admiringly. There was no one who could look fresher or more attractive than Mickey of a morning. And it amused him to see the resentful sparkle that was now in her eyes.

"In this business," he said, "things must be starting all the time. If they weren't, we'd have to shut the doors and try to get other jobs."

"What's happening to her?" asked Mickey.

"Not anything to her. She wanted me to meet Dr. Pierce. He had something."

"That would be a job with no money in it, just as I've said," the secretary told him. "Do you know you're touching bottom at the bank?"

"There's a little left," said Jerry. "And before that's gone, we'll have some coming in."

Gootch made his appearance, looking very neat and businesslike; he might have been a European Turk, a Greek, or Armenian; he smoked a perfumed cigarette with quite a manner.

"The time has been short," he said as he sat beside Mooney's desk. "But I have something; and in a little while there will be more. This person, Julius Daniver, of whom you desire information, conducts his personal affairs with a good deal of caution. The business of Greensleeves is, of course, more open."

"It's his personal side I wanted the news on," said Jerry.

"I had not forgotten that," said Gootch. He took out a notebook and thumbed its pages. "Daniver is a Bulgarian, or is of Bulgarian blood. He seems to be slippery. Once he was a vaudeville agent. That was ten years ago. He was booking acts for floor-shows. His brother Simon was in the fur trade, with a small little place and no money. Suddenly he had a chance to buy the Greensleeves business, and on very good terms. But he had no money, and Julius, when he heard of it, pushed Simon aside. Somehow he took the firm over, and after that Greensleeves was the business of Daniver Brothers."

"In three or four years, Simon was pushed once more. This time, out," said Gootch. "He was too small-time. Julius wanted such a business that his brother didn't know about. He promoted a silver-fox farm, and sold stock in it; the report is he'd made some nice money when it suddenly collapsed."

"He is a judge of wine; and at times buys expensive vintages for parties he gives at high-class restaurants. But he is not such a large drinker. He gambles some, but not too often. He wants to be a theatrical producer. Very expensive musical things are in his ideas. With much dancing. And, now that we come to that," said Gootch with a pleased smile, "dancing is his weakness. He is an expert. All the dance-places know him. All his women friends are dancers. It is said there's nothing he'd rather do than show himself on the dance-floor with one of them. Or maybe another."

"A stepper, eh?" said Jerry. "Well, that ought to show something. Who are some of his women?"

"Up to this," replied Gootch, "I have asked no one. As I have said, the time has been short."

"I know," said Jerry, "and you've covered quite a bit of ground. But let's see a few names and places."

"I can give no names just now, as I've said. But I can name a place. Tonight he dines at the Algerian Moon. And when he dines, he also dances."

"Good enough. Stay on Daniver for the rest of the day, and tomorrow morning. Report here about noon. Get anything you can on him. You never can tell what will be useful."

CHAPTER THREE



THAT night Jerry Moon-ey, in evening clothes, and Mickey, in a gown that showed her off to perfection, set out to dine

and dance at the Algerian Moon. José, the major-domo at the restaurant, received them with his usual smile. He found a table for them; he personally attended the hanging away of their things. He snapped his fingers for their favorite waiter. Sixto Marchand, leader of the orchestra, bowed and smiled when he saw them. More than that, after they were comfortably settled and had an inspiring cocktail, he rapped for the attention of his men. Then the great room was set throbbing with Mickey's favorite waltz.

When they had resumed their seats at the table. José bent over them.

"Twice," he said, to Jerry, "the telephone has called you."

"If it does it again, I'll answer," said Jerry.

Shortly afterward a page plugged in a telephone at their table.

"Party calling Mr. Mooney."

Jerry spoke into the instrument.

"This is Mooney!"

At once he recognized the voice of Gootch.

"Sor-ree," said the man, "but there has been a happening, and your party may be late. Today there was trouble at his establishment."

"What?" asked Jerry.

"In the middle of the day, when there were many people in the place, there was a scream. The patrons of the place were startled, for there was a revolver seen in a woman's hand. She struggled with the people who held her. But nothing more happened; she was taken away."

"Who was she?"

"The name is Jessie Haldren. She is, I understand, a dancer."

"I see," said Mooney. And Mickey, as she watched him, noted a change in his expression. "Who was the shooter meant for?"

"That I have not yet found out. But the police will tell me that."

"Let me know tomorrow," said Jerry. "Thank you."

"Yes, Mr. Mooney. Thank you."

Jerry told Mickey what had occurred.

"A revolver!" said the secretary in surprise.

"Evidently intended to make some one sore and sorry," said he. "The name of the girl is Jessie Haldren. Do you recall her?"

Mickey furrowed her brows.

"No, I don't. Is she some one I've met?"

"Maybe not. But I feel pretty sure of her. There was a police lieutenant downtown I knew. And he had a daughter named Jessie who grew up as a dancer. Good, too, they tell me."

"Speaking of dancing," said Mickey, nodding her head toward a couple moving about the floor, "that seems like the real thing to me."

"Very nice," said Jerry, after watching them admiringly for a space. Then a thought came into his mind and he added: "I wonder—" He signaled the waiter. "Who are those people?" indicating them.

"Oh, theesel!" said the man engagingly. "She is Mees Tancree. The man, he is Julius Daniver."

"Check!" said Jerry. "It's the party I wanted to see," to Mickey. "And I suppose she's one of the models I hear he races out with now and then."

The girl was blonde and tall, as lithe as a whip, and yet with much splendor of figure. Her gown might have been made for a prima donna in one of the big musical shows, and she wore it with a dash and abandon that was thrilling to see.

"And the guy's not bad. He's nearly up to fifty," said Jerry, guessing shrewdly, "but he's as light and sure on his feet as a boy of twenty."

"And she's coming on thirty, but she's wonderful," said Mickey, "both in face and figure; and dancing, as she does it, is an art."

"She was by the stage," said the waiter. "And a big hit. You would see her name '*Sue Tancree*' on all the bills. Why she should leave such a thing and be a cloak-model, I don't know."

"I don't; either," said Mickey, as the man moved away. "I remember her now. And she was dazzling."

"She still is!" stated Jerry. "But I'm keeping my eye on the dancing furrier. Precision like that comes only from what's called years of study. Swift—easy—soft. Like a cat! And get the way he holds his head! If there aint a lot of actual cat in him, I'll have to change my mind."

José, passing and seeing how their attention was held, paused.

"They are magnificent, are they not? Señor Daniver is noted. The Tancree, she is amazing. They often come here. When they do, Sixto Marchand is enchanted!"

The dance ended in a few moments; the music ceased, and most of the dancers retired to their tables.

"You would be interested, Mr. Mooney," said José, in a hushed voice, "to know that the police are here."

"No!" said Jerry. "What's up?"

"It is the beautiful Tancree. Today an attempt, I'm told, was made upon her life. At the establishment of Greensleeves. It is feared that this attempt will be renewed tonight. The girl!"—and his voice was lower—"who made the attempt, is also here."

"I see," said Jerry. "What police have been sent?"

"They are not in uniform," José told him in a whisper. "There are three of them. See, you will notice a beautiful, dark-haired girl three tables away just as you are facing. It is she. The young man beside her is her escort. He made a scene at the entrance when they were refused admission. It was thought best to let them come in; but the police were notified, and they came at once."

"Does Daniver or the girl know about this?"

"Not yet; but I think the manager will tell them. They will, maybe, go, when they know it."

Mickey had heard only a little of this; and when José left them, Jerry bent over the table and told her the rest.

"I can't see her," said Mickey. "Do you think it'd be all right if I turned around?"

Jerry, whose eyes had been fixed upon the girl the major-domo had indicated, said:

"You'll not have to; she's got up, and unless I'm mistaken, is headed straight for this table."

The girl approached, slowly but very firmly, and with the air of one quite sure of herself. When beside them, she said:

"Pardon me, but am I right in thinking you are Jerry Mooney?"

Jerry arose.

"I'm Jerry Mooney," he said.

"Do you mind if I sit down for a moment? I would like to speak with you."

Jerry drew back a chair for her; she sat down. And her dark eyes fixed themselves upon Mickey.

"I hope I don't annoy you," she said. "It will only be for a few minutes."

Mickey nodded that she was not at all put out. And she looked at the girl with a good deal of admiration. She'd seldom seen such a superb figure, such flashing gypsy beauty.

"I am Jessie Haldren," the girl told Jerry. "You once were a friend of my father's."

"He was Lieutenant Haldren, of the police?"

"Yes."

"There's never been anyone that figured higher with me than Joe Haldren," said Jerry. "He was my friend back in the times when I needed a friend."

Mickey saw tears in the dark, beautiful eyes; and there was a look in them that had not been there before.

"I thank you," said Jessie Haldren. "To have you say that means a good deal to me. Today"—her eyes were clear of tears now and she looked steadily at Jerry—"I was arrested. They said I had attempted murder."

Jerry nodded. "I've heard of it," he said.

"Sue Tancree,"—and the dark eyes went to the table where the lovely blonde girl was sitting with Julius Daniver—"said I tried to shoot her at Greensleeves today. I was afterward taken to the police station, but she refused to make a charge against me."

"Listen," said Jerry in a low tone. He saw many eyes directed toward his table, and knew many ears were open to hear what was being said; and as he spoke, he leaned toward the girl to prevent this. "The word I get is that you had a revolver in your hand when they grabbed you."

"I had," she said readily. "But I had no intention of harming that girl."

"I take it," said Jerry, "that you've spoken to me to ask me to do something about this. And I say all right. There's nothing I'd do quicker. But trouble with the police can be real trouble, and I'll need to understand things. What was the idea of the revolver? If it wasn't to use on Tancree, what *did* you mean to do with it?"

"I did not mean to shoot her. Nor anyone else." The girl looked at him, her beautiful eyes as steady as before.

"Is that all you care to say?"

"That is all I can say."

"Your carrying a gun is against the law," said Jerry. "They could do something about that, you know."

But Jessie Haldren shook her head.

"So they told me," she said. "But I know laws like that are not constitutional, and will not hold in a Federal Court."

Jerry smiled. This girl had wits, and he felt she knew how to use them.

"Just the same," he said, "the police can give you a lot of uneasy minutes. They could take you through a lot of things you'd not like." He studied Jessie Haldren. "I think they might hold you until you told them what they wanted to know. Somebody screamed. What for? They could work on Tancree. She's already said you meant to shoot her. The fact that she said this, and afterward refused to press it, is suspicious. It looks like something's being covered up. And there's nothing that gets the attention of the cops like a thing of that kind. It makes them restless. They want to know."

"I didn't mean to shoot her," persisted the girl.

"O. K.," said Jerry. "Maybe you didn't. But if they take the notion, as I've just said, they can make you plenty trouble." There was a pause; and then he added. "What do you want me to do?"

Here the voice of a person close behind them said:

"There is nothing you *can* do." Jerry turned in his chair, and saw the young man who'd been sitting at the table with Jessie Haldren a few moments before. He was not more than twenty-five, carefully dressed, good looking, but showing signs of having taken too much liquor in the last little while. "I hope you'll pardon me," he said, speaking more directly to Mickey than to Jerry. "I know I'm a little tight, but I thought it best to have something to say in this matter before it goes too far."

"Frank," said Jessie, "you promised me you'd not interfere."

"Yes, I know," said Frank. "But I've reconsidered that." He gave his attention to Jerry. "Jessie is impulsive," he said. "She gets a notion; it's something she shouldn't do, but she binds you hand and foot with a promise, and then goes and does it." He swayed a trifle and spoke once more to Mickey. "I'm sorry if I'm intruding. But this has been an exciting day, and if I've fortified myself more than I should have, the blame can be placed directly on that." He turned again to Jerry. "Jessie is in a small jam," he told him. "The fact is, I am—"

Jessie Haldren arose.

"We'll have to go, Frank," she said. "He's probably right," she said to Jerry. "I shouldn't have spoken to you about this matter. After all, it's really over, and there will be nothing more about it." She showed her beautiful teeth in a smile that took in both Mickey and Jerry Mooney. "I'm sorry," she said. "And I thank you lots for being so willing to listen."

CHAPTER FOUR



EXT morning Gootch again called at Mooney's office in the Etruria Tower. "Something goes on at Greensleeves," he said as

he sat at Jerry's desk and smoked his perfumed cigarette. "This matter of the revolver and the beautiful lady was quite unexpected."

"Have you anything inside on that?" asked Jerry.

"It is the dancing," said Gootch. "Also, it is the jealousy. Tancree dances. So does this girl who flashed the revolver. Both are friends of Daniver."

"There could be a good deal in a thing like that," said Jerry.

"Such matters cause much trouble," Gootch informed him. "They can be very serious. As I spoke to one person and then to the next, I found Daniver is to stage a show—in New York! And of much magnificence. There will be a principal dancer. First," said Gootch, "it was the Haldren. But afterward the Tancree was spoken of. Such things cause emotion. See the revolver, and the scream in the Greensleeves establishment."

"Daniver is going to put on a show, eh?"

"Also," said Gootch, "he will dance. It is his ambition. The furs, they say, mean nothing to him."

"Shows cost money. I'm wondering how he's fixed that way."

Gootch gestured with the cigarette.

"I have asked that. He uses other people's money. The Haldren brought him much. But I have heard it whispered that Tancree has many friends. It is maybe that way she gets the principal rôle."

Jerry nodded his head. "Could be," he said.

Gootch talked of other things having to do with Daniver; and after he'd taken leave, Jerry had Mickey call Zoe Edleigh. In a few moments she was speaking to him.

"If you have the time," he said, "I'd like to run around and have some talk."

"Do," she said. "It's been awfully dull today, and I feel you'll be exciting."

Within fifteen minutes he was at her place in the Russell-Alwyn, with a tall drink before him, and a cigarette.

"Are you still game about wanting a part in this thing—if there is anything?" he asked her.

"By all means!" she said. "It would be an experience."

"Yeah," he told her, "it'd be that, anyway. But you'd be taking some chances."

"That would be a thrill," she said, and he saw eagerness in her eyes.

"I've got a layout," he said. "It's not new; but I think we can get away with it because it'd be done with a lot of stage effects."

"Now," she said, "I want to be in it more than ever. I feel as though I were playing in a movie."

"All right," he told her. "I'll start to put the thing together. We may be ready in two days."

He called Chubby at Barney's Diner from the telephone in the Russell lobby on his way out.

"I'm going to the office," he said. "Get there as soon as you can."

Chubby, rosy-cheeked and round, was chatting with Mickey in the outside room when Jerry arrived. They went into the side office and Jerry immediately took up the thing that was occupying his mind.

"On the Sedley Road, not far above Vernon, there is a place called Heron House. I want you to get yourself a drive-it-yourself car and run out there. On the way, and on the way back, pay strict attention to the road; because you'll be going over it again soon, and on that trip you're going to be some one who knows all about it. When you get near the house on this first trip, leave the car somewhere on the road and take a good look at the place on foot: the driveway, the entrance, and all that."

"What about inside?" asked Chubby.

"You'll have nothing to do with that. When you get everything in your mind, drive back to town, turn in the car and report to me at once."

"O. K.," said Chubby alertly. "I get a car, drive it out the Sedley Road to a place called Heron House, which is above Vernon. I get a good look at the road both ways. I take a look at the house and the driveways. Then I come back and report."

"Right," said Jerry. "Start now, and try to get as little attention out there as you can."

"Me, I'll work just like I'm casing the place for a future opening," said Chubby. He started for the door. "You'll hear from me in a couple of hours."

Jerry called Mickey to get him a number.

"See if Cora's in," he said.

In a few moments, her voice came: "Here's Cora."

"Hello, Cora," said Jerry. "A little work. Get yourself up very neat. Have a bag. Go to the Central Station. There get a cab and go to the Purvis Hotel. Take a room. The name is Harbison. Sometime tomorrow you'll get word that you have permission to see a place called Heron House on the Sedley Road the day after. Got that?"

"Perfectly."

"All right. That'll be all for now. There will be something more to follow."

After he'd put down the telephone, Mickey tapped on the door and came in.

"I listened," she said. Jerry grinned at her and lighted a cigarette. "I wouldn't have," she continued, "if it hadn't been Cora. You never call that woman unless there's something cooking."

"Come to think of it, I don't," said Jerry.

"And then there's Gootch and Chubby," she said, accusingly. "I hope you're not going to put your neck out somewhere, Mooney, and give somebody a chance at it."

"It might be. But, look: you don't often see them land on me, do you?"

"I know what you mean when you say often," Mickey said. "But I have seen you coming in here looking pretty

well kicked around. And I have seen you missing the cops by only a minute or two."

"This one looks pretty easy," Jerry said.

"It's one of those charity things," said Mickey. "Where somebody is taking a pasting and not able to help themselves. And you're going to jump right straight through a couple of laws to help them."

"This time," said Jerry, "you'll not be in it."

"Well, don't think I'm talking this way because I thought I was going to be," said Mickey spiritedly. "You know I'm as big a chump as you are when it comes to things like that. But you're getting a reputation. And Pash won't always miss you. The time will come when he'll hit you straight between your shoulders; and as I've often said before, when he gets you down, you know how much chance you'll have for getting up."

"You know very well a party like Pash'll never see the day he'll do that," said Jerry. "The star he was born under don't swing that far in the sky. He's a good cop; but he's only a cop. I've got a bag of stuff still full at the place where he stops."

CHAPTER FIVE



REENSLEEVES is famous in all sections of America where intaglio sections and style magazines circulate. The house

has always been known, not only for the beauty of its furs but for the beauty of its models. The tall grace, the marvelous loveliness of these was the wonder of the advertising world; and they crowded the splendid showrooms with palpitating customers. There were uniformed footmen, doormen and pages. The saleswomen were handsome; the lighting of the place was perfection.

Before a tall mirror in the center of the room a girl moved up and down—a lovely girl with a mass of that rare sort of red hair that is almost purple, an almost dead-white skin, a matchless figure.

"The others were good," she said as she studied the beautiful coat she was wearing, "but I did not care for them. This one pleases me."

The saleswomen smiled and nodded their carefully-done heads; they gathered in a little, admiring group. This was a big sale! Daniver was present—handsome, decorative, wearing what his competitors called his "million-dollar manner."

"The others are rare skins," he said. "Perfectly matched, and with a great deal of effort and skill used in the work on them." He looked at the splendid, glowing fur the red-haired girl was wearing, and gestured complete admiration. "But this is unique. It is an absolute matching of temperaments: your own and that of the garment."

The girl looked at the lovely coat as it was reflected in the mirror. She knew it became her wonderfully; she knew the price, when she asked about it, would be startling. But she also knew that the rapt admiration going on around her, and the speech about the matching of temperaments was merely peanuts. And while she gazed in the mirror, the coat was not the only thing that held her attention. She liked her red hair. It set her off in a new and enjoyable way. The girl Jerry Mooney had sent her to for making-up knew her job. And it wasn't only the red hair; it was also that touch that widened her eyes, and it was something done to the corners of her mouth. Also the smooth, almost white skin. She smiled as she looked. It was a beautiful and exceedingly smart girl she saw—one but remotely resembling Zoe Edleigh.

She spoke to one of the attendants; at once the coat was taken from her and thrown gleaming across the back of a chair. She looked at Daniver.

"What price do you ask for it?" she said.

He smiled. His manner was excellent; there was a carelessness in it, a color that spoke of a knowledge of both quality and value. But with this was the detachment of a fine artist selling one of his masterpieces.

"In the money named for a fur like this, we must put all the time, the good fortune and labor that's involved," he told her. "We must consider the temperature of the northern country at the time it was taken, the persistency and good luck of the trapper, the rare chance of finding three or four animals in exactly the same remarkable condition. Greensleeves does not ask really high prices," he said. "The house aims always to mention a sum pitched as low as possible." He looked at the wonderful coat, flung off-handedly upon a chair-back, and stroked his chin. "Any price would be low for this," he said. "But the value attached to it now is fifteen thousand dollars."

The red-haired girl looked at the coat for a moment, and then said:

"I will take it." She motioned to the attendant, and her own coat was slipped upon her shoulders. "I'm Myra Fordyce, of Heron House," she said. "My father is Jerome Fordyce, of the East State Steel Company."

Daniver looked at a thin-faced, elderly man standing at one side. The man shook his head ever so slightly. Zoe Edleigh was drawing on her gloves, standing very close to the mirror, and admiring the purple notes in her hair.

"The fur, I think, can be delivered tomorrow; perhaps next day," said Daniver.

But the proud head of the girl lifted; she looked at him with level eyes.

"I will take it with me," she said. She opened a leather case which she held in her hand. "If you will hand me a pen, I will make out a check for the full amount."

Daniver's manner was smoothly faultless; his eyes were filled with regret.

"I am sorry," he said, "but it is one of the rules of the house that we must take certain steps where our patrons are not known to us."

The leather case was snapped shut.

"That is just as well, I suppose," said the girl. "For my father should really see the fur before it is purchased. But he is in town only for a day or so. Suppose one of your people drove out with me in charge of the coat. If it is approved, the money will be paid in cash, and the car will be at the service of your employee for the return to town."

Daniver closed his eyes; he seemed to be considering. And then he said:

"I think that will be quite satisfactory. And if you will pardon me a moment, I will make the arrangements." He was gone a short time, and when he reappeared, he was smiling. "We are ready at any time you say," he said. "Our Miss Tancred will go with you. The matter will be entirely in her hands. You may deal with her just as you would with me."

A BIG, shining car was at the door of Greensleeves'. A stocky young man in gray livery was at the wheel. He wore amber glasses, and there was a red scar with puckered edges extending from his left eye to his ear. "Home," said the girl with the beautiful red hair. "And take the shortest way. Miss Tancred is, perhaps, limited in her time."

But Miss Tancred, in a throaty voice that drewled attractively, assured her that there was no hurry.

"In a transaction of this kind," she said, "we are always leisurely. People like it much better that way."

But Charles seemed to think haste was best, and the car rushed through the bright winter sunlight at a high speed. It was not long before they found themselves running along a road which permitted a good deal to be seen of the open country. The two girls chatted, but the driver seemed to be in a quite serious mood. He was watching

the little mirror before him; at last the red-head noticed this.

"What is it, Charles?" she asked.

"There's a car behind that's been following us," he said. "For the last half-hour."

"Perhaps it is merely going our way."

"I thought that too, and tried a couple of turns some distance back. But they kept right on our trail."

NOTHING more was said about it for a space, and then the chauffeur suddenly began hauling at his wheel. "Here they come," he said, as he headed the car close in and plowed a way through the brush along the roadside. "They mean to stop us."

A gray car which had been running at high speed had overhauled them, and was forcing them farther and farther off the road. At length the scarred chauffeur brought the black car to a halt. The other car also halted, with its nose directly across the track of the other. The only person in it was the girl who was driving—a beautiful, spirited girl, dark, and with flashing eyes. She sat back in her seat and drew off her gloves quietly.

"I'm sorry if I'm inconveniencing you," she said to Zoe Edleigh. "But it will be for only a few minutes." Then turning to the blonde girl, she said:

"Sue, I've been trying to see you, and you have been avoiding me. But now I've got you so you'll have to listen to me."

The blonde girl looked at her with contempt.

"I'll not listen, no matter what the circumstances," she said.

"All right," said the other. "I'll say what I have to say, anyhow. No one will ever be able to charge me with not giving you a chance."

"Julius will not be pleased when he hears of this," said Sue Tancred coldly. "I am out on his business, and you have endangered all our lives by your recklessness."

"I don't care what Julius thinks," said the other girl. "He should be the last to complain. And I'm not thinking of him now, but of you. I'm asking what you mean to do. And I warn you, it is your last chance."

Sue Tancred spoke to the chauffeur.

"Please pull your car back," she said. "I do not wish to listen to this girl."

Without waiting to see what the man would do, the girl in the gray freed her motor and gradually pulled out of his path. The scarred driver pulled away from the roadside; then the black car, as though glad of its escape, raced away at high speed, leaving the other standing in the road, the girl at the wheel holding it tightly and gazing after the receding car, her face set and white. . . .

The Fordyce car passed under a stone arch when it left the road some miles farther on; then it crept along a curving way around a clump of maples. There it drew up before Heron House. The chauffeur got out and opened the door; the girls alighted. The man relieved Miss Tancred of the fur and followed them up the broad steps and into the house. They now stood in a lobby, lofty and chaste in design. A soft light entered through windows placed high up in either wall.

Sue Tancred looked around.

"You have a beautiful place," she said, a good deal impressed.

"Father likes it," said the other girl as she removed her gloves. "But his health is bad, and he's seldom this far north in the winter." She looked at the chauffeur. "Will you ring for Marcy, please?"

In a few moments a smart maid appeared.

"Oh, Miss Myra, I didn't expect you," she said.

"I hadn't expected to be back so soon," said Myra. And then: "How is my father?"

"He seems very alert and nice. He thought of going for a drive when Charles returned."

"He shall do that tomorrow if he feels up to it." She pointed to the coat which lay upon a table where the chauffeur had placed it. "Show him that. Tell him I bought it, and the people want their pay in cash."

"Yes, Miss Myra."

The maid took up the fur, and left the room. Miss Fordyce said to the chauffeur:

"Don't put away the car, Charles. Miss Tancree will use it going back to town."

When the man had gone out, Miss Fordyce offered Miss Tancree a cigarette. They smoked and talked about the house. And in a little while the maid came in, smiling.

"Mr. Fordyce likes the fur, Miss Myra. He said you are to open the safe and get the money."

"Didn't he ask the price?"

"No, miss." The maid's smile was wide. "But he did say he thought it would be a fancy one, seeing *you* hadn't mentioned it."

Myra Fordyce laughed at this. She put her cigarette in a tray, and said to Miss Tancree:

"You see, he knows my ways. You'll pardon me for a moment?"

She went through a door at the rear of the lobby; the maid followed her. Miss Tancree sat smoking and admiring the lofty grace of the room.

It was about six o'clock that evening, and Jerry Mooney was going over some papers at his desk when his telephone buzzed.

"Chubby is here," said Mickey from the outer office.

"Send him in," said Jerry.

Chubby entered, sat down and looked at the other.

"Hear from Miss Edleigh?"

"Yes, an hour ago. But with no inside word."

"I'd have been here sooner, but I had to change the plates on the car. Besides that, I had to get that scar off my face. Do you know, that thing was so near a fact that I could almost remember the time I got the cut that made it."

"Everything went through all right?"

"Like a clock. Miss Edleigh went to Cora's and was made up. You ought to seen her in red hair. She's a princess! At first she didn't want to have the stuff put on. But when Cora showed her it'd wash right off, she said all right. Then Cora got a train and went out to the place. About an hour later, Miss Edleigh went around to Singer & Dowling's store. When she came out, I was waiting for her, and took her to Greensleeves. Quite some time afterward she came out with the fur and the blonde. And I drove them out to Heron House."

"Not much to it, the way you tell it."

"Now, wait," said Chubby. He lighted a cigarette. "You aint heard all of it."

He then told how the girl in the gray car forced him to the side of the road, and what happened between her and Tancree.

"Them two sure had it in for each other," he said. "Especially the one in the other car."

"Dark and handsome, you say?" said Jerry, frowning.

"Yeah; and a dream! The madder she got," said Chubby, "the better she looked."

"Tancree made no objections about the fur getting out of sight at the house?"

"Cora says she never said a word."

"Nice enough. And now what about Apsotolus? What'll he give for the fur?"

"He offers eight grand."

"Let him have it. But get cash."

"He told me he was robbing his family. But I know that codfish. I could see he was all set to make a nice chunk of money."

Jerry wrote a name and address on a sheet of paper.

"The eight thousand is to be turned over to the woman. But be careful. Have Cora do it; and get her to tell this

story: The money was stolen years ago from her husband—before he went into business with his brother. The thief was an employee who was never able to pay it back, though he wanted to. And because of this, it's a thing that must not be told to anyone."

"No talk? O. K.," said Chubby.

CHAPTER SIX



HERON HOUSE was located some distance back from the road, about a mile and a half from Vernon.

It was a square-built stone house with wide grounds, drives, trees and ornamental shrubbery. It was an old house, but in a fine state of repair; and all about it was neat and orderly.

It was a little past eight next morning; the weather was clear and snappy; a lift of smoke came from the caretaker's house, which was fifty yards away from the mansion and almost hidden by the spruce trees and evergreens.

The caretaker's breakfast was all but ready; but he took his keys from a hook on the kitchen wall and started for the house. Padlow always did that of a morning. He was a dull-looking man of past middle age and not quick of foot; but he made it a rule to see to the house before everything else. The big "FOR RENT" sign upon the lawn had blown down during the night; he picked it up and put it in place. Then he went to the rear, unlocked a door and went in.

He passed through a kitchen and pantry, both newly done in the modern way. Padlow looked at the glistening freshness of everything with a deal of satisfaction. He felt it was a credit to him to have charge of such a place. And as he went about from room to room on the first floor, he wondered why it had not been rented long since. Completely equipped, nothing lacking, it was most attractive. There was garage space for three cars; the station was only a half-mile away; the roads were good. Why the people, who now and then came to look, passed it by, he could not understand.

His custom was to go through the house of a morning and look into all the rooms. There had been people in on the previous afternoon inspecting the place, and none of the inside doors had been locked; so he went up the back stairs to the third floor and looked into the three servants' rooms and the bath, locking the door of each as he closed it. On the second floor there were six bedrooms and three baths. These were inspected and locked; then he descended to the lower floor. The dining-room was quite all right; so was the living-room. He'd already seen the kitchen and pantry. There remained only the lobby at the front of the house.

He opened the door of this—and stood appalled and staring. For on the great warm-colored rug that covered the floor lay the body of a beautiful girl.

Padlow was a slow-witted man, and an unexpected thing always stopped his mind down more than usual. Bit by bit his eyes took in the dreadful thing before him. First the rich shining golden hair; the richness of her costume; the prone, terrified position of the body, which told plainly of an awful instant in which hope had gone and death was very near.

Leaving the door open behind him, the caretaker ran stumbling from the place; down the twisting path to his own house he hurried. His wife was arranging the dishes on the table for their breakfast when he burst in. She cried out to know what was the matter; but he motioned her aside, and took up the telephone at his little desk by the window. He called a number which he took from an address-book kept in a drawer.

And when the answer came, he said:

"Is this the police?"

"Yes," came the reply.

"This is Heron House. On the Sedley Road, above Vernon. Will you send some one at once? There has been a murder done."

"Right," came the voice at the other end, businesslike, with no trace of excitement. "We'll be there."

In a half hour a small red car came speeding up to Heron House. There were two burly young policemen in it, and they immediately took charge. A little later a larger car appeared. This carried a hard-featured, brief-spoken police surgeon; also an inspector and a sergeant. While the inspector talked with Padlow, the surgeon and sergeant examined the body.

"Pretty cold," said the sergeant.

"Been dead for ten or more hours," said the surgeon, going on with his work. "Whoever struck her made sure of it. One blow was enough."

The police technicians presently began to arrive: photographers and finger-print men busied themselves in the room of death. Cabs began to throng the roadway outside the gates, and hard-boiled reporters began their enterprising maneuverings. The caretaker's telephone, being the only one at hand, his small house was gradually overrun with eager news-men and stolid, clipped-speech police.

The sergeant grinned at the clamorous reporters.

"What can I tell you?" he asked. "It's a woman. Yes, and she was young. And you can say she was blonde and beautiful and not be telling a lie."

"What's the doctor say?"

"The customary blunt instrument," said the sergeant. "But it's not to be found. Not so far."

"Is the inspector working on anything?"

"The usual going-over," said the sergeant. "No trace of anything in the room itself. But one of the men found a window on the far side that looks as though it had been forced; and there are footprints under it."

The press photographers eagerly hurried around the house to record these items.

"What are the chances of getting inside?" asked one of the news-men.

"None at all. You'll have to be contented with what comes to you secondhand. That is," with another grin, "unless Pash sees fit to give you some liberties."

"Pash!" said the reporter in a tone that sounded like a groan.

"Don't tell me that old buzzard is going to have charge," said another dismally.

"He's on his way now. I've just had word of it from Headquarters."

"Well," said the first reporter, "I don't see any future around here. There is what might be an attractive dish to serve in the mid-afternoon editions; but not with Pash doing the work on it. If he had his way, there wouldn't be a press running in the city."

IN the next quarter-hour Pash arrived—a man who was above fifty, spare, long-necked, with a nose like a hawk's beak, astride which rode a pair of staring lenses. He conferred with the inspector, looked at the notes that had been made, and went into the death-room. "Where's Brill?" he asked, noting the absence of the surgeon.

"He left as soon as he'd finished here," said the sergeant. "He had several other cases."

"He's too light of foot," grumbled Pash. "Always stepping out before he tells what he's found."

"He left these notes," said the sergeant, offering some slips of paper.

Pash looked at the notes, and with a contemptuous scowl thrust them into his pocket.

"Things like these might be all right for a medical lecture," he said, "but they're no good in the police business." He went out into the broad, high-ceilinged dining-room. "Let's have the caretaker."

The word was passed; and the sergeant, looking at an entry in his book, read:

"Name of Padlow. Been here for six months. Looks like an old slow-go-easy."

PADLOW came into the room, and nodded to the police official. He seemed nervous, and kept picking at his nails. "What's your name?" demanded Pash, staring at the man through his lenses.

"Ellis Padlow," said the man. "Always lived in this county. I've been at the Heron House for some months."

"Who employed you?"

"The agent of the property, Mr. Jarvis. I've worked for him off and on for some years—as a gardener, a handyman, a caretaker."

"Jarvis has been notified," said the sergeant to Pash.

"You are here as a caretaker?" said the Captain to Padlow.

"Yes."

"Which means what?"

"I look after the place. If there are people who want to see the house, I show them through it and explain things."

"Someone came to look at it yesterday, I've been told."

"Yes sir. Mr. Jarvis telephoned me on the day before that there would be inquiries made by some prospects of the name of Harbison. He said they were coming out in the early afternoon, and for me to be on the lookout for them."

"Harbison?" Pash frowned at the man and fixed him with a stare. "What kind of people were they?"

"I didn't see them, sir. Sometime after one o'clock a maid came. I think she must have come by train and walked here from the station. She said some members of the family would be along in a few hours. She had been told to come in advance and make quite sure the place was in order. They wanted to see it at its best."

"How was it you didn't see them?"

"After a little while," said Padlow, "the maid seemed very agitated. She said Mrs. Harbison hadn't the directions. She wouldn't be able to find Heron House. I said to her she could telephone from my house. But she said Mrs. Harbison was not at home. She was visiting the Inverneighs at their place just beyond Paoli; and that Mrs. Inverneigh's telephone number was a private one, was not in the book, and that she didn't know it."

The sergeant glanced at Pash.

"Something starts!" he said.

Pash grunted, and said to the caretaker:

"Go on."

"The maid asked me if I had a car. I said I had, and then she wanted to know if I'd take the message. Now, this wasn't regular," said Padlow. "Under other circumstances I wouldn't have done such a thing. But Mr. Jarvis had telephoned me to do everything I could to satisfy them. So she wrote the message, and I got out my car and started for Paoli. It took some time to get there. I asked about the Inverneighs, but nobody seemed to know them. I drove around for an hour, but couldn't find them. Then I went back to Paoli. The station people didn't know them. Neither did the post office. Then I started back home."

"What then?" asked Pash.

"My wife said the Harbisons had come and gone. Two women and a driver—in a big car. I was out of temper with the girl for giving me all that trouble," said Padlow. "Before I ate my supper, which my wife had waiting for me, I went around to all the outside doors and made sure they were fast."

"What about the windows?"

"I didn't look at them," admitted Padlow. "It never struck me they'd be disturbed. I don't open them when I'm showing the house to anyone."

The caretaker's wife was then asked to come in. She was a stout woman, short of breath and not very intelligent. "You saw the Harbisons' car and the people in it, Mrs. Padlow?" asked Pash.

"Yes sir. Though it was no more than a glimpse. The driveway to our cottage is all of a twist, sir, and there are a good many shrubs in the way. But I did make out it was a big car, very shiny and handsome; and that there were two ladies and the driver."

"What were the women like?"

"That, sir, I couldn't say, except that they seemed beautifully dressed."

"What time did they leave?"

But Mrs. Padlow shook her head.

"I don't know. I was busy doing little things about the house, and they'd slipped out of my mind entirely."

"Have you seen the body?"

"Oh, no sir," said Mrs. Padlow, her large body trembling. "I don't think I could bear it."

"Is there anything else you have to say?"

"No sir; I don't know a thing except what my husband told me."

"What about you?" asked Pash, of Padlow. "Had you ever seen the girl before?"

"Never, sir. As I've told you, I didn't see any of them except the maid."

"Can you call anything to mind that happened after you got back from Paoli?"

"Nothing, sir. We had a very quiet evening. There was nothing at all."

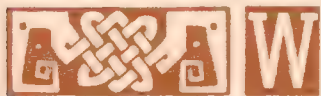
Pash looked at the woman.

"There was the telephone-call," she said to her husband.

"What was that?" Pash looked at Padlow with the keenness of an old hawk. He'd seen many a good lead pop up in just this way.

"It was just after I'd had my supper, and I was looking over the paper the boy tosses over the hedge in the evening. The telephone rings, and I answer. It's a man's voice; and he asks for some one of the name of Fordyce. I told him there must be a mistake, because there was no one of that name here. He made no reply; I put the telephone down and went back to my paper."

CHAPTER SEVEN



WHEN Pash reached his office at Headquarters he found the house agent, Jarvis, who had the renting of Heron House. Jar-

vis was a commonplace-looking man of no more than forty, with his hair carefully brushed over a rather large bald spot, and who had a habit of pulling at his tie to make sure it was properly adjusted.

"I have been in business for fifteen years," he told Pash, "and nothing like this—nothing remotely resembling it—has ever taken place before."

"What do you know about these Harbison people who went to look at the house?" asked Pash, gazing at him with cold eyes.

"Nothing at all. I've never even seen them."

"They telephoned about the house?"

"Not even that. An agent named Rosmer was representing them. He said he was looking for a furnished house. A good-sized one, and not too far from the city. His requirement was that it be a residence of class. His people, if it pleased them, would take it for a year."

"Where is this Rosmer located?"

"In the Grander Building. But he must be here; he started for Headquarters as soon as I phoned him what had happened."

"If Rosmer is here, bring him in," directed Pash, speaking to one of the policemen. And then he continued, to Jarvis: "Who is the owner of Heron House?"

"It is the property of a family named Syblen. Mr. Syblen is a shipping man, connected with the Coast Ship & Air Line which is in the South American trade. He bought Heron House about two years ago, and spent a great deal of money in repairs and furnishings. But he'd only lived in the place six months when he was suddenly transferred to Rio de Janeiro. Before leaving with his family, he put the establishment in my hands for rental." Mr. Jarvis shook his head and fumbled with his tie. "It is poorly located for most people, though quite a charming old place."

Here Rosmer, the other agent, was brought in. He was an alert-looking young man, carefully dressed, and carrying a leather document-case. He was speaking to Jarvis when the Captain spoke to him:

"Tell us about these Harbisons who wanted to look at the house," Pash ordered.

But Rosmer knew almost as little as Jarvis.

"They telephoned me from the Purvis Hotel," he said. "They'd passed the house, it seems, while driving around, and noticed it was for rent. They hadn't remembered the agent's name and asked if I could look him up and let them hear from me. I got the permit from Jarvis, and sent it around to the hotel."

"Neither of you saw them," said Pash, looking at Rosmer with an expression of complete disfavor. "It seems to me you people have a very loose way of doing business."

"There is a caretaker who knows all about this property," said Jarvis. "That is, all about showing it. We usually consider that enough for a beginning. If there is increasing interest, after the first view, we at once contact the parties and go further into the matter."

"Engle, get the Purvis Hotel and ask about the Harbisons," said Pash to a stocky man in a hard hat who stood listening. "—Anyone of that name who's stopped there during this week."

Engle left the office on this errand. Pash told the rental men to wait, and then called in the people who had the technical details of the case in hand. The report was that the clothing was good. Very expensive, indeed. There were a number of articles of jewelry, the value of which would be high. No marks were on the clothing, except a fur piece which carried the name Greensleeves.

While these matters were being gone over, the plain-clothesman, Engle, returned. And at the mention of the name Greensleeves, he cocked up his ears.

"Now, wait!" he said. "Maybe we've got something. About an hour or so ago we had a call from these Greensleeves, about a girl who works there, a model. She left the place yesterday—to collect fifteen thousand dollars. And she aint got back. She aint been home. Nobody knows anything about her."

The hawklike nose of Pash seemed more curved than usual; his hard eyes gleamed through his big lenses.

"Any description?"

"I think there was."

"All right. Kelly,"—to one of the policemen,—"get what they've got and let me know if it's anything like what we have." And then to Engle: "What about the Harbisons?"

"The manager at the Purvis says there was only one of them—a woman. She was a stranger who stopped there overnight. Signed herself Mrs. G. L. Harbison, Washington, D. C."

The contents of the girl's handbag was shown upon the Captain's desk: There was a sum of money—also several handkerchiefs, and a few toilet articles that looked of high value; but no name, and no address.

"That's the way," said Pash. "They go around, day after day, with not a scrap of anything on them to tell who they are. There should be a regulation: every person in every community should be compelled to have an identification card, and make it a point to carry it with them."

All the findings of the technical people were carefully gone over. There were no fingerprints except those of the caretaker and his wife. The weapon that had been used for the murderous blow had not been found. The window at the rear of the house which had been forced open, definitely showed the thing had been freshly done. Not only that: the caretaker, Padlow, said he knew the window had been locked the morning before. He'd had it open for a while, then closed and locked it himself.

"The footprints in the soft ground under the window," said one of the experts, "were freshly made. And whoever made them had dragged his feet deliberately to break them up and hide anything a clean imprint might tell."

"Somebody with his wits working," said Pash. "Somebody who knew what to do."

THE desk phone began buzzing at this point, and Pash took it up. "Yes," he said, "what is it?" There was a pause; then he added: "Send him in."

In a few moments the door opened, and a policeman came in with a young man who wore a leather coat and seemed to be a mechanic of some sort.

"My name's Finny," he said to Pash. "I work for the Acme Garage up on the Sedley Road. I heard about this business at Heron House, and I thought I might have something you ought to know."

"What?" said Pash grimly.

"There was a call came in at the garage at some time after two o'clock yesterday. Somebody was having tire-trouble down the road. Right away I got out my car and started. Just as I got near Heron House I saw a car turn as though to go in. It was a big car, and the driver had turned too short. He stopped and backed out; I had to wait while he was doing it."

"And then what?" asked Pash.

"There were two girls in the bus," said the trouble-shooter. "Very swell! One a yellow blonde, and the other a redhead. Dressed fine. Looked like what you'd call heiresses. The driver was a dark kind of guy. And he had a scar on his cheek—a good-sized one; looked like he'd been burnt sometime."

"Did they say anything?"

"Not a word. As soon as the driver got his range, he drove in, and I went on to find the party with the flat."

"This man with the scar: what side was it on?"

The young man considered.

"Well," he said, "I was driving south, and he was turning right. It was on the left side," he told Pash. "It must have been; that was the only side I could see."

"Did you notice the license plate?"

"No, I didn't."

The Captain questioned him for some time, but nothing more was learned. As the young man was leaving, he said:

"Before I came down here, I stopped at Heron House to ask the policeman just how I'd find you. And while I was there, they showed me some tire-tracks at a place on the drive. They were made by the caretaker's car; I spotted them right away, because I'd fixed them a couple of times. But I thought I saw something funny in the tracks of the other one. The car I'd seen was a big job, in first-class condition—everything about it quite spick and span. But when I look at the tracks, I see the tires are patched, in three or four places. Not very good work, either."

The hawk look was once more in the eyes of Pash; the big lenses astride his nose gleamed with increased fervor.

"Did you look for anything else?" he asked.

"Yes, I did—because the thing looked funny to me: a swell car like that, and rolling on cobbled-up rubbers! I

gave it some attention, and what it looked like to me was that the tires were really as good as the car; the patches had been put on for a gag."

When the mechanic had gone, Kelly, the man Pash had sent out awhile before, returned with news.

"The girl at Heron House is the girl from Greensleeves, Captain," said the man. "Her name's Sue Tancree. She's a model at Greensleeves. We just had the place on the phone and one of the firm is on his way here."

"Right," said Pash, his eyes gleaming. He asked if there was anyone else at hand who had information; as there was none, he cleared the office except for Engle. "This is the kind of a case that might turn into anything," he said. "It might be completely open and shut when all the news seems in. Or it might switch right around on us and grow into something else."

About fifteen minutes later, Julius Daniver was shown in. He gave Pash his card with a little bow.

"Daniver Brothers have been conducting the Greensleeves business for about ten years. We purchased it from the Greensleeves when they had grown out of all interest in it."

"I see," said Pash. "The Greensleeves are no longer connected with the house; you and your brother run it."

Daniver smiled.

"I run it," he explained. "My brother retired five years ago—though," he added with a gesture, "the name Daniver Brothers is still used."

"I'd like you to tell me about this girl Sue Tancree," said Pash.

Daniver shook his head, a troubled look in his eyes.

"This seems to be a dreadful set of circumstances," he said. "At the office we all knew she was missing; but none of us thought of such a thing as is now suggested."

"I'm glad you used that word," said Pash, "—because it is nothing more than a suggestion. No one has identified the body as yet. It may turn out not to be the girl we think."

"I sincerely hope it will turn out so," said the furrier.

"Miss Tancree was, or is, a lovely and accomplished girl. Her death under such circumstances would be a terrible blow."

"As I've been given to understand," said Pash, "she was sent out to collect fifteen thousand dollars. Tell me about that."

DANIVER drew his slender and very graceful body erect before the Captain's desk; his dark, handsome face had the expression of an actor about to begin an important scene.

"Very frequently," he said, "people come to our place pricing expensive furs. Perhaps half the time they are people who must be watched. They ask for credit after they have, perhaps, selected the most expensive piece we have in the place. Or they offer a check. Often they say they are relatives of well-known people. Often they claim to be well-known people themselves."

Pash gestured. "Furriers and jewelers," he said. "The big thieves like them equally well."

"Yesterday," said Daniver, "a girl came in. Very beautiful—expensively dressed. Her car stood at the curb with a liveried chauffeur. She asked to see fur coats. None but the best and high-priced appealed to her. She had the manner of a young duchess. After about a half-hour she settled upon a coat that was priced at fifteen thousand dollars. Talk of price had little effect on her; but when it came time for payment, there were a few moments that were not pleasant. We did not know her, and could not accept a check. Then she suggested that we send someone with her. The money would be paid on arrival at her home. We agreed to do this. Miss Tancree was sent. That was early yesterday afternoon. We have not seen her since."

"That's an old racket," said Engle, "but I've never heard of it ending in murder before."

"What name did this girl give?" asked Pash.

"Fordyce. And she seemed quite surprised at our not knowing it."

"Fordyce!" Pash looked at Engle. And then he said to Daniver. "Some one telephoned Heron House last night and asked for Fordyce."

"That was probably my call," said Daniver. "When Miss Tancree didn't return, we began to think something might have gone wrong."

"Did it come into your mind," asked Engle, "that she might have made a run for it with the fifteen thousand?"

"No," said Daniver. "We knew our Miss Tancree. One of the most dependable people we've ever had in our employ."

"They are often the very people to try that little trick," said Engle. "The reason being, they get the chance."

The telephone rang at this moment, and Pash answered.

"I think the result of this matter shows very clearly that nothing like that was true in Miss Tancree's case," said Daniver coldly. "That is, if it should be found that the body is really hers."

Pash put down the telephone, placed his elbows on the desk and looked at the furrier.

"Before you came down here," he asked, "did you send some one to look at the body for identification?"

"Yes; two of my people were sent."

"Word has come in," said Pash. "They are sure the corpse is that of Miss Sue Tancree."

Daniver turned white; he shook his head. And when he spoke, his voice was broken.

"I was afraid of that," he said. "She found they meant to steal the fur, and perhaps tried to prevent it. And they killed her."

Daniver had gone; Pash at his desk was glowering at the pad before him, and prodding at it with the end of a pencil.

"Somehow," he said to Engle, "this doesn't seem just like a fur job. It has angles that take it away from the usual thing."

But Engle didn't think so. He knew fur-thieves. And there were a lot of ways they went about their business: they broke into storehouses, or into shops; they smashed show windows; they waylaid trucks; they operated in hotels and other public places. He could have said a good deal to his superior along these lines, but Pash was not a man you could make suggestions to. A good cop, understand, but one who wanted his own way. If you tried to shove him out of anything, he was apt to take your head off. And Engle wasn't a man who invited trouble.

"What people working the fur racket are in town?" asked the Captain.

"There's Lefty Pebbles; and I've seen Tommy Shunz in the last week. Mary Deever is still around, and then—"

But Pash gestured him to stop.

"All small-fry. Sneaks, mostly. None of that kind'd have the front to try a job like this one. Whoever it was had more or less large ideas. And they had a lot of style."

"I aint seen any heavy artillery for a long time," said the plain-clothes man. "The fur thing aint steady work for anybody; it's a kind of a side-line. The big boys don't bother about it unless they know of a big lot in one place."

Pash glowered at the pad as he tapped endlessly at it with the pencil.

"A high-class car stops in front of a swell fur establishment. A woman, young and good-looking, and seeming the very top of everything, gets out, goes in and prices furs. She picks out what was the highest-marked piece in the place, and goes away with it in her car, along with this Tancree girl."

Pash looked at Engle, who nodded in agreement.

"To get away with fifteen thousand dollars," said Pash, "these people went to a lot of trouble. They gave a couple of days to the job. They got an impressive-looking car with, no doubt, a pair of phony license plates. They got permission to use this house, and sent a girl out ahead of them to make sure all was clear. Which she did. But something else happened as the thing was in progress."

"It must have," said Engle. "The usual gag is to get hold of the property, take it out of the room to show it to some one else, and then make the get-away, leaving the party sent with it sitting and waiting."

"As I see it," said Pash, "one of two things happened: The first is that Tancree was suspicious. She refused to let them take the fur out of the room where she was supposed to wait. And then they hit her over the head."

"That must have been it," said Engle. "They were afraid she'd start to yell and maybe attract attention. And maybe they hit her harder than they meant to do."

"The second thing that might have happened," said Pash, "is that some one else might have been in the house—a man. The fur-thieves might have worked their game smoothly to the end. They might have slipped away with the coat, leaving the girl, as you say, sitting. It might have been the some one else in the house that killed her."

"But listen," said Engle, "how do we know there was—" He stopped. Then he took off the hard hat and wiped his forehead with a handkerchief. "You're thinking about that window that was forced, aint you?"

"About the window, and the scuffed-up footprints under it."

Engle readjusted the hat and put the handkerchief away.

"When you look at it that way, it does make a different kind of case," he said.

CHAPTER EIGHT



JERRY MOONEY slept late that morning. It was about nine o'clock when he was awakened by the ringing of a bell. He was

reaching for the telephone when he realized it was not that but the apartment bell that was sounding. So he got up and spoke into the door phone.

"Is that Mooney?" said a voice.

"Yes."

"Well, I'm the party you saw that night with Jessie Hal-dren at the Algerian Moon."

"Oh, yes," said Jerry, now quite awake. "How are you?"

"I'd like to come up," said the voice, "—for a few words with you."

"All right," said Jerry. "Come ahead."

When the young man came in, Jerry saw he was quite sober. Also he looked rather drawn and pale. He sat down on being invited, and he said:

"I don't know if I said anything out of the way the other night. If I did, I apologize."

"No; you were all right," said Jerry.

"My name's Updyke," said the young man. "I'm seen around a good bit these days, and often get into the newspapers as a troublemaker at places. But I'm a friend of Jessie's, and I don't stand for things being said about her."

"That sounds like the proper thing to me," Jerry told him. "Last night was the only time I ever saw her, but I feel about the same way."

"She said she thought you would," said young Updyke, "but some others don't feel like that. This party Daniver has treated her rotten, and so has Sue Tancree." The young man put his hand on Jerry's arm, and it closed with

a tight grip. "However, we'll hear very little more of Sue," he said. "She did a lot of dirty undercover work in the last month or so. But everything comes to an end."

"So it does," said Jerry.

"What I wanted to say to you," said Updyke, "is this: Jessie had the idea you could help her some. And now I think maybe you could, too. If the time comes when she'll make a professional call on you, I hope you'll be open to give her some of your time."

"Yes, I will," said Jerry, "—whenever she makes up her mind."

"Many thanks," said the young man. "I'll be seeing her sometime today, and I'll tell her."

Updyke talked for a while and then departed. Jerry then had his bath, and dressed; at the office he was very busy during the morning. At noon he had a glass of milk and a sandwich. He noticed that Mickey didn't go out for lunch, being quite busy with her typing; and along about two o'clock he called to her:

"What say to a small hot dish, and a drink of something?"

"It's a nice idea," she answered. "And maybe you'd like to try a place I've just found."

They walked through the crowds in Presbry Street: there was a great voice booming from high up on the side of a radio building—a broadcaster was telling the news. And as they drew near, he had finished with one topic and was beginning another.

"There are some new and important developments in the Heron House mystery," thundered the voice. "The body of the murdered girl has been taken to the morgue. In the last fifteen minutes it was identified as that of Sue Tancree, a model at Greensleeves' and well known among the dancing set of the city."

Jerry Mooney and Mickey had stopped to listen. Mickey felt the arm she was holding tighten; and looking at Jerry, she saw his jaw set and his eyes full of swift questioning. They went on for a space, and turned in at the place Mickey had in mind.

"I'll have the drink," he said to her, "but just now I'll not be eating anything."

"That name we just heard," said Mickey. "Didn't it pass between you and Haldren at the Moon that night?"

"Yes, it did."

"Jerry," said Mickey, alarm in her eyes, "has something happened?"

"Don't talk," said he. "And don't be scared." The drinks came, and he swallowed his at once. "Now I'll be moving along," he said. "There's been something happening, and I always like to get started with the gun. They'll know things at Headquarters. I'll move over there and listen for a while."

"Be careful," said Mickey as he got up.

He smiled at her. "You know me," he said. "I always do try to be that."

CAPTAIN PASH was still in his office: the telephone rang and the voice of Berg, the sergeant at the desk outside, said in his ear:

"Mooney's outside here. He'd like to see you if you're not busy."

"Tell him I am," said the Captain, more than the usual rasp in his voice. "I've got no time to waste on—" But he paused, and then said: "Wait a minute." He sat with the receiver to his ear, and considered. Engle, who was present, watching him, saw his eyes begin to brighten; the lenses astride his beak of a nose gleamed; a hard, expectant sort of smile fixed itself at the corners of his mouth. "All right," he said at last, "let him come in."

Jerry Mooney came into the office.

"How are you, Captain?" he said, pulling off his gloves and laying them on the desk. "Everything all right, I hope?"

Pash stared at him with bleak eyes. "What're you after?" he asked.

Mooney laughed. And while he was doing so, he waved a hand at Engle in greeting.

"I happened to be in the neighborhood," he said. "And you know: once a cop, always a cop. I couldn't resist dropping in and passing the time of day."

"YOU didn't drop in about that Stuart matter a few weeks ago," said Pash. "And I sent word to you I wanted to see you. And that blackmail case: you never opened your mouth to me about what you found out on that."

"Well, you know," said Mooney, "looking them right in the eye, Captain, both those things were private matters."

"Blackmail's not a private matter!" stated Pash, thumping the desk. "It's a police matter, and well you know it."

"Now, let's step back a little and take a look," Mooney said good-humoredly. "The Department made up its mind it was blackmail and was operating under that idea. But I found out it was something altogether different. Just a sort of family misunderstanding, and the regular police had no place in it at all. It was all settled without any noise, and everything okey-doke."

"I know," said Pash, and his voice lifted into a cutting protest. "You always have something like that as a cover-up. But the police have a right to all information," he stated, his bony finger prodding the desk. "The day will come, Mooney, when I'll have the satisfaction of throwing you into the can for some of the stuff you try to work on this Department."

"Listen," said Mooney, "don't get your pressure started. You know you were warned about that, the last time you were up for examination."

"Never mind about me," said Pash. "I'll take care of myself."

"Well," said Jerry, "that's fine. You've always been there with the spirited answer; I'll say that for you."

Pash sat back in his chair. "What do you want?" he asked.

"I've been listening to the late bulletins, and I hear they've identified the body of the girl that was found dead in the house out on Sedley Road."

"Yes," said Pash. "But that's not what you've come here for."

Jerry grinned.

"No," he said. "At least, not exactly. But it starts me thinking."

"About what?"

"Well," said Mooney, "that's neither here nor there. When people come to me and put down a retainer, I never tell."

Pash began to smolder. This argument he'd had with Jerry many times before. He was an official who believed absolutely in the authority of the police; and anyone who disagreed with him was a potential lawbreaker.

"Mooney," he said, "a murder has been committed, and the city authorities have begun an investigation. When a thing like that's going on, anybody knowing anything is required to step up and tell it. As soon as I heard of this fur thing, it brought you into my mind. An old trick—but good. As soon as I hear of something like that pulled, I begin to see you in it."

"I understand," said Jerry, "there was a window forced at the place. What'd you get out of that?"

"We've just opened this matter," said Pash. "We're working on it. And we'll soon have the facts together. After that, maybe I'll be able to answer that question."

"The girl's name was Tancree, I hear," said Jerry, "—Sue Tancree. Not a usual name. They say she was once a dancer in the night-clubs—a Wisconsin girl. Lately she worked for Greensleeves as a model. Modeling and certain kinds of show business go together, it seems."

Pash narrowed his eyes. "What's behind all this interest? You never talk unless there's a reason for it, Mooney."

Jerry put a hand on the desk and leaned toward Pash. "When I'm paid for a job, I always try to give service," he said. "My interest in the murder is only on the side. My interest in Tancree is nothing at all. I'm thinking of possible hook-ups."

"Hook-ups with what?"

Jerry smiled. "That," he said, "is my business."

"Maybe if I reasoned with you," said Pash, "I could get you to understand there's a killer loose, and the Department wants him—or her. And anything leading to that arrest must be uncovered. Don't you see that?"

"It might be," said Jerry, "if you didn't start in the middle of things, we might get on better. That there is a killer, and that you want to arrest him, is the thing I wanted to talk about."

"All right. Go ahead and talk."

"I was thinking if someone wanted to kill Tancree, why did they bother with the fur coat, the furnished house, the swell dame, the chauffeur and the car? It all looks like a kind of a parade that wasn't needed for a homicide."

"You got a pretty good load of this case in a short time," Pash said.

"I got it in about thirty seconds," said Jerry. "These broadcasters usually pull their work in a hurry."

"Those things you mention," Pash told him, "have all interested us. But we haven't been able to make much of them; maybe, now that you've come into it,"—bitterly,— "we'll do better."

"What," said Jerry, paying no attention to the manner or tone of this, "have you been able to get on the foot-prints party? What are the chances these were made by somebody who didn't figure in the fur-snatching at all?"

"How does it come you're interested in that?"

"As you know, I'm interested in all police stuff," said Jerry. "What I've just said, being a thing that splits off from the rest of this case, came into my mind first."

"Listen, Mooney," said the Captain. "Are you working for this fur gang? And is this thing you've just said going to be their story when we catch up with them?"

"What say if we not go into anything but the murder? That's the thing I'm interested in."

"I get, from that, you've accepted money from a party of crooks," said Pash. "Which, if you've forgotten it, makes you an accessory after the fact."

"Any private ideas you have," said Jerry, "are all right with me. But I'm asking you not to let them interfere with other matters. Homicide is a thing that should always be cleared up. And seeing it that way, nobody who wants to help should ever get the brush-off."

"When I ask for help," said Pash, "I'll never be looking in your direction. Make up your mind to that."

"If you'd only give a little," said Jerry, "we might often get together on things. But as I see you're not going to I'll go along on my own, as usual." He was moving toward the door, then paused. "What about me going out to this Heron House place and taking a look?"

"You keep away from there," said Pash, leaning across the desk and warning him with a gesture. "We don't want any outsiders poking around."

"Well, I thought it'd be the polite thing to ask you. But as you're not thinking the way I am, I'll step in at the D. A.'s office. I usually have better luck there."

AFTER a short visit in the district attorney's office, Jerry Mooney stepped into a telephone booth in an office building across the way. He called the Russell-Alwyn, and in a moment was listening to the fear-filled voice of Zoe Edleigh.

"Jerry! Oh, I'm glad you called. Please, please come see me."

"I'll be there in five minutes," he told her.

Zoe was curled up in a big chair when Jerry reached her apartment. Her eyes were red with weeping. Joe Pierce was also there, pacing the floor, greatly disturbed. "That poor girl!" said Zoe. "I'm sick with grief every time I think of her. Dead! Murdered! And to think she was killed in the house where we took her!" Zoe sat up, pale with fright. "For how much of it do you think we are to blame?"

"Don't get a lot of things in your mind," Jerry advised. "Of course, in an outside way, we had something to do with it. But the murder was a planned thing. If it hadn't happened on Sedley Road, it would have happened somewhere else."

"Are you thinking of the girl who stopped the car on the way to Heron House?" asked Dr. Pierce.

"There are a lot of things that need looking into," said Jerry. "And that's one of them."

"Little by little, the different parts of a thing like this drift into the hands of the police," said Pierce. "I think I see trouble coming."

"For us?" said Zoe, her eyes wide open.

"Keep steady," said Jerry. "Mind what you do and what you say. If there's trouble coming, we can step out of its way. And the way to do that is to find out who killed Sue Tancree, and why. With the facts of that in their hands, the police'll forget all about the fur trick."

JERRY remained talking for some time; and on his way out, in the lobby, he called a telephone number.

"Algerian Moon," came a voice.

"I want Monte Fisher," said Jerry.

"One moment, please." There was a pause, and then another voice said: "Monte Fisher speaking."

"Monte, this is Jerry Mooney."

"How are you, Jerry? What's happening?"

"The other night at your place I met a young fellow named Updyke. What can you tell me about him?"

"Now, listen, Jerry," said Monte Fisher, complainingly. "I always try to think of the patrons of the place as friends. And I never talk about them to cops."

"Forget the cop part of it. This is strictly out in the clear. I saw him with Jessie Haldren at your place, and she rates a good bit of friendliness from me."

"All right, Jerry—just so long as I'm not shoving the boy into any kind of trouble. I don't know much about him, as a matter of fact. He came here with Jessie a few times, and I've met him at Charley Fraden's. Maybe if you talked with Charley, he could tell you something."

Charley Fraden's business was gambling. He had two floors on Dillon Street; and when Jerry reached the place there was not much activity. Charley was a young man, but portly; he sat at a desk and polished his nails by rubbing them against his coat-sleeve.

"Frank Updyke?" he said. "Yeah, I know him." He looked at Jerry with interest. "What's he been up to?"

"Nothing that I know of," said Jerry. "He's just a party that's drifted in on something, maybe without knowing it. And I want to set him right."

"Well," said Charley Fraden, looking at his nails with only mild satisfaction, "he's got money. And he does some drinking. He likes the dice game, and is up and down in it; but never too much. He used to be kind of smart with the girls. Floor-show girls, from choruses, and things like that. But since he's known Haldren, he goes along quietly. I think maybe he'll marry her."

"What about his money interests?" asked Jerry.

"He's careful. He'll never do anything when he's tight. When a proposition is made to him, he waits till he's all clear in the head and then gives it a good look. The swift boys have never thrown him for much, and have about given him up."

"There must be a softening somewhere," Jerry protested. "They always have them."

Charley took a small file with an ivory handle from a drawer in his desk, and went guardedly to work on a thumb nail.

"Maybe his would be show business," he said. "He likes the theater. And I think he's ambitious for Haldren. But I wouldn't know. Putting on shows costs a lot of jack, and as I say, he's careful."

WHEN Jerry Mooney left Fraden's office, he stepped in at the *Evening Globe* and spoke to Farlen, a partly bald young man who did the theaters.

"Listen, Mooney," complained Farlen, "I don't know anything. There's going to be no more turning my office hours into a quiz program. Besides, I haven't the time."

As he was sitting with both long legs over the arm of his chair, reading a motion-picture magazine, Jerry grinned at this statement.

"I want to talk about money," he told Farlen. "Investments. And in shows. That ought to be right down your alley."

"There's no one putting money in shows in this town," said Farlen. "They go to New York for that."

"I'm looking up a little matter that had a show investment in it," Jerry told him. "Some local people. I'm trying to straighten out a few angles."

"Would that be Updyke?" asked Farlen.

"He's in it."

"I've listened to talk about him," said the bald young man. "But it gets nowhere. This new thing is something about a project of Daniver's. But Daniver's got no money. He can't pay what he owes. And that," said Farlen, "is plenty."

"Did he get that way in show business?"

"Yeah. He was in that 'Starshine' bust last season. And it scraped him clean. Also," said Farlen, "he pulled a couple of pals in with him." There was a look in Farlen's face that Jerry didn't understand. "Everybody," stated the drama man, "should stick to his own racket. Even a gambling business needs care, if you're going to keep it from turning around and biting you."

"Speaking of gambling," said Jerry, "I was talking with Fraden awhile ago."

"Did he send you here about Updyke?"

"Oh, no. I guess if he had anything to tell me, he'd done it himself."

"Charley's good-natured," said Farlen, "and he don't say much. I guess a guy in his line can't do any loose talking. But I'll say," said the drama columnist, "when I heard he'd dropped his kick on Broadway, I almost passed out."

"What's the chances of his being in this new proposition of Daniver's?"

"There shouldn't be any."

"What about Updyke?" asked Jerry.

Farlen glanced at him with an inquiring eye.

"Are you looking into this thing for him?"

"No," said Jerry. "Though I'll admit I've worked up a little interest in him here and there."

"Well, he's got plenty," said Farlen, "and if he wants to step out, I don't know why he shouldn't pay." He laughed. "Even if he drops a good sockful, he ought to think he's come out of it ahead. If he hadn't met Daniver, he'd not met Jessie Haldren."

"Looking at it that way," said Jerry, "I begin to see what you mean." He eyed Farlen for a moment, and then ventured. "But I understand Haldren is out of this new thing."

"I've heard that too," Farlen said. "Daniver likes women; but if he doesn't make progress, he drops them."

"You think he had ideas about Jessie?"

"He always does. As he sees it, that's what women are for. Now he's got this new one, Sue Tancree; a grand dancer, and not a bad voice. Someone's told me he's got

her at Greensleeves as a model. He seems to be holding her close."

Jerry looked at him, his mouth drawn down at one side.

"Do you sit in this little den of yours and never get any news?" he said.

Farlen grinned.

"Why, is there some? I only got in a few minutes ago, and was looking at my dish in the weekly *Picture Book*."

"Sue Tancree has been murdered."

"What!" Farlen came out of his chair with a leap. He grabbed at a late edition of the *Globe*, which he'd no doubt thrown off his desk when he came in. The story stared at him from the first page. "Holy smoke!" he said. "Murdered!"

He rapidly picked up the facts as known; then he sat down rather weakly.

"Found this morning. Her head cracked. Dead!" Gradually the daze the news had thrown him in, cleared. "This guy Daniver must be off his nut. He must have thought these people who wanted the fur might be crooked. If he hadn't, why did he send someone with them? And thinking that way, why did he send a girl? That was a job for the house cop. He ought to have—" He paused and looked at Jerry, surmise in his eyes. "Listen, Mooney," he said, "are you on this thing?"

"I'm a little interested; but only where it touches something else," replied Jerry.

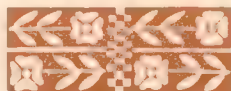
Farlen frowned over the papers and did not speak. After reading the accounts of the crime once more, he took up his telephone and said:

"This is Farlen. See if you can get any one in the local room." There was a delay; then came a voice. "Oh, that you, Andy? . . . Yeah, Farlen. . . . What have you new on that Tancree murder?"

As the reply came, Jerry saw the drama editor's face twist as though a sudden pain had rasped its nerves. Then he put down the telephone. He looked at Jerry.

"They've arrested Jessie Haldren," he said.

CHAPTER NINE



THE next two days were full for Jerry. Here are a few pages from his notebook, done in his curt but informative manner:

Police headquarters. Saw Pash. Poison, as usual. Also saw Haldren. Looked pretty worn. She denied everything. Knew nothing of Heron House. Never had heard name of Sedley Road. Didn't mean to shoot Tancree that day at Greensleeves.

Afterward saw old party named Rule. And his wife. They had been cutting twigs at hedge. Heard the cars stop. Angry talk. Heard Jessie tell Tancree she was giving her a chance. Name of Julius was mentioned. Jessie said he ought to be the last one to complain.

Later saw Gootch. Had he heard the name of Frank Updyke? Said no. I told him to find out all about the "Starshine" show of last season. What money was in it. To get information on all people concerned. Get all on Updyke.

Heron House next day. Looked at everything in police report. Broken window catch. Footprints in mould under window. Tracks of patched tires. Talked with the caretaker. Got word of several people who might know something.

One of these, old Mrs. Gilpin, who lived near by, saw a young man in road about time the killing might have been done. Was tall—wore no hat—was looking through the evergreen trees toward Heron House.

Hunted up Finny at garage. He told me of party who'd telephoned him to come and fix flat tire. Didn't get name.

But did get number. G.F.630. Man was tall. Car was jacked up in side road when Finny got there. Wheel was off. Tools scattered around. There had been two other men. One had gone to telephone garage and hadn't come back.

Found side road where the car had stood. Asked about telephones in neighborhood. Found the Rules had the only one near by. They were the people I'd seen at Headquarters. Lived in same road. Talked with Rule. He remembered a man had asked to use telephone that day. A young man. Rather stout, well dressed. Yes, he wore a hat. A black derby. Very becoming to him, Rule thought.

AFTER talking with Rule, Jerry did not return to Heron House. He took the next train into the city; and when he reached the office, he was told Gootch was waiting for him.

"Sorry I've held you up," said Jerry as he entered the other office.

"It is nothing," said Gootch. "I have spent the time fixing up my ideas."

Jerry sat down and looked at Gootch.

"What's about Updyke?" he asked.

"I have inquired about him," Gootch said. "He was easy. When someone said 'His life is an open book,' they must have been thinking of him."

Jerry grinned. "Glad to hear the boy's kept his nose clean," he said.

"I do not mean that everything about him has been A-1," Gootch cautioned. "I mean it has been 'open.' Not closed. Nothing hidden."

"Oh, yes," said Jerry with interest. "When he did a thing, all the neighbors knew it. I've seen them that way."

"Updyke's people got their money out of a cough medicine."

"He's one of those Updykes, is he?" said Jerry admiringly. "Great publicity. Once, every time you coughed, you thought of the whole family."

"He's the last of them," said Gootch. "And all the money the medicine made, he's got now. Many sporting people are his friends. He likes to collect suits of clothes, but never wears a hat."

"I noticed," said Jerry, cocking an eye at Gootch, "that the only times I've seen him, he didn't have any."

"He is friends with Daniver," said Gootch. "I have information about conferences they've had. About shows. Especially about money to finance shows."

"Updyke's money?"

"Oh, yes. Never Daniver's."

Jerry crossed his knees, and dangled one foot thoughtfully.

"Did anyone mention anything about Updyke having money in a show called 'Starshine'?"

Gootch shook his head.

"I have heard of that one. It was not lucky. I've heard of other people having money in it, but not Updyke. His money is for another one—in the future."

"An angel; but only growing his wings," commented Jerry.

"But," said Gootch, "lately he'd made up his mind to do nothing. The reason is that this girl who is now with the police was to have the leading part, as I have already told you. But Daniver liked the Tancree best; they say he danced better with her than with the other. When he put Haldren aside, Updyke was angry. I have learned that at the time—at the store when the revolver was seen—he'd struck Daniver."

"Yeah?" said Jerry, much interested. "What else?"

"That was all I could get anyone to say."

"Was anyone else mentioned in the floating of the new show?" asked Jerry.

"A composer who was to write music. A director who was to train the dancers. A business man to make the ar-

rangements. I think you know him: Farlen, of the *Evening Globe*."

"Yes, indeed," said Jerry thoughtfully, the foot still dangling. "Farlen, eh?" He considered this for a moment or two. "What about Charley Fraden?" he asked.

"No. I have not heard that he has invested in the new show. But he was in 'Starshine.'"

"And lost money?"

"That is the story," replied Gootch.

"How do Charley and Daniver stand together? Are they friendly?"

"I told you the other day that Daniver gambled a little. Sometimes he goes to Fraden's place. Often they would sit and talk. Sometimes Updyke would talk with them."

Jerry got up; he paced the floor for a space.

"I think I'm beginning to see a few things coming together," said Jerry. "Maybe I'm wrong, but we'll know in a little while. Suppose," he said to Gootch, "you lay off for a day or two. I'll give you a call when I want you."

After Gootch had gone, Jerry continued pacing; he lighted a cigarette and drew in deep draughts of smoke. He whistled; he put his hands in his pockets and frowned. Then he went into the other office and talked with Mickey.

"You've thought of something," she said to him.

"How do you tell?"

"By that tune you're whistling. When I hear that, I always know there's a bright idea along with it."

He smiled at her.

"Has Chubby telephoned today?" he asked.

"Early this morning. He said if you needed him, to call around. He'd be in one place or another."

"See if you can get him."

Mickey dialed a number. Then she spoke into the phone: "Is Chubby around?" The answer was no, and she dialed another number. "Could I speak to Chubby, please?" She nodded to Jerry. "He's there," she said, and handed him the telephone.

In a moment Jerry heard Chubby's voice.

"This is Mooney," said Jerry. "Asking a little information."

"Me," said Chubby, "I'm full of it. What do you want to know?"

"Who's backing Charley Fraden's game?"

"Well, now," said Chubby, "I wouldn't be knowing, exactly. But if anybody told me it was Max Faxter, I wouldn't say no to it."

"Have you ever heard of Max shooting at show business?"

"Listen," said Chubby; "he might have been. I got some talk about him losing plenty about a year ago. It might have been a show. Maybe I could find out from Fraden."

"Keep away from Fraden," said Jerry. "I don't want him to start thinking."

"O. K.," said Chubby. "Anything else?"

"Not now. But I'll be calling you later."

"I'm always in ear-sight of a phone," said Chubby. "Keep trying."

WHEN Jerry put down the telephone, Mickey said to him: "I've got a little plan I thought of yesterday. There are some of the girls from that 'Starshine' show who are here at the Savoy this week."

"That so," said Jerry, with quick interest.

"I know them," Mickey told him. "And I'm going to throw a little party for them tonight at 'The Pickled Pepper.' And I mean to get talking about things."

"What a girl!" said Jerry admiringly. "And don't forget the charge is on the house. Take enough with you."

When Jerry left the Etruria Tower, he struck into Walnut Street; after a few blocks he turned north and presently entered at a doorway and mounted a flight of stairs. On a door was the name MAX FAXTER. And following it was the word *Promotions*.

He turned the knob, and went in. There was a girl at a desk, showing a great deal of stocking, and chewing gum.

"I'm seeing Max," said Jerry.

"You, nor nobody is," stated the girl. "It's late."

"Not too late," Jerry assured her. "It's never too late for jolly old friends to have a little talk."

"Friends!" said the girl, and looked at him with disdain. "You never was a friend to nobody, Mooney. Any kind of a cop's lousy, but a private one's the worst."

"That's only on certain occasions," said Jerry, grinning. "When the other party begins to work left-handed, you've always got to put on the pressure. But Max and me have always been like that"—crossing his fingers and holding them up. "And you know it."

"I do in a pig's eye," said the girl, chewing the gum angrily. "You aint no friend of Max's. Look what you done to him in that Pickins business. You got him in court, and showed him up."

"Oh, now, why bring that up?" said Jerry. "That's old stuff. Pickins was my client, wasn't he? But I'd no sooner put one foot in front of the other in the case than Max told a couple of his friends and started them to work on me. Business is business, you know, and a sock in the jaw never sweetened anybody's coffee." Jerry looked toward a door marked *Private*. "What say if you tell him I'm here?"

"He'll not see you," said the girl.

Jerry opened the door, and put in his head.

"Hi'yah, Max!" he said. "What's happening to you?"

MAX was a stout young man with a boyish face and a crop of unruly hair. He was lying on a sofa, and had been asleep. He now got up and looked at Jerry in a not too friendly way.

"Aint you got no office manners?" he asked. "Don't you know when it says *private* on a door, it means *private*?"

"Yeah," said Jerry amiably. "And I've always believed it, too." He closed the door behind him and sat down. "But I didn't stop in, Max, to talk etiquette with you. What I want to do is tell you they've got Jessie Haldren in the cooler."

Max Faxter lighted a cigarette and looked at Jerry.

"I heard that," he said. "But why wake me up to tell me about it?"

Jerry dangled one foot idly.

"You're in a bad temper. What you ought to do is stop visiting neighboring layouts. Leave that kind of thing to the suckers. Or"—and he turned his eyes on Faxter—"is it true that most of you well-instructed boys are your own worst enemies?"

"I'm in business," said Faxter. "And when you're in business, you got to take your chances. And I never kick if they are chances. But when I'm asked in, and aint got no chance, is when I get sore."

"With a party that turns things over as quick as you do," said Jerry, "I'd thought you'd be over that 'Starshine' flop by now."

"Me, I never talk about things that happened last year, or the year before," said Max Faxter. "They're over, and you can't never get any percentage out of them. It's the things that are cooking now that get me, if they aint right."

There was a pause; Max drew deeply upon his cigarette and then put it down.

"What gave you the idea of coming to see me?" he said.

"I thought you might have a piece of this new show Daniver's been fooling with lately, and that you might know Haldren."

"I do know her. And I knew the girl she's supposed to have knocked over. But I can't do anything for her. I'm stuck. I couldn't buy a good-sized sack of peanuts."

Max lighted another cigarette.

"Understand," he said, "I aint got anything against this Haldren. She's nice. I like them just the way she is. But

when this other one came in, this one they found dead in that house, I knew there was going to be trouble."

"Daniver's a simp for women," said Jerry.

"Awhile ago I didn't know that," said Max. "I ought to've been told. I thought he was a money guy. He always talked smart. But when I seen him trying to play one woman against another, and never knowing he was in the middle, I begins to wonder. And now look what's happened."

"Outside the murder, what *has* happened?" asked Jerry.

Max Faxter looked at him, suspicion in his eyes.

"Aint murder enough?" he said.

"It doesn't often happen without something setting it moving."

Max put down the second cigarette.

"Aint two battling dames enough?"

"I understand Daniver always sells pieces of what he means to do. Who else beside you was in this one?"

The suspicion in the promoter's eyes increased.

"What d'you mean?" he asked. "What gave you the idea I was in this?"

Jerry grinned. "Aint I just been hearing you talk about dropping a lot of money in that other one? I thought maybe you'd want to win back in this."

"Any money that's been lost in show business wasn't put into it by me. And another thing: once I've had my necktie kicked off, that's enough."

"My mistake," said Jerry. "Then it was somebody else, working with your money?"

"Listen," said Faxter, "what's behind this? Here you come in waking me up and begin to dig into things. What's your place in this, Mooney? I don't forget you're a plain-pants cop. I know you can be hired to do jobs. What kind of a one are you on now?"

"I'm trying to get Haldren out of this jam," said Jerry.

"But why come here? It looks like you're trying to get me wrapped up in this."

"My job aint that kind," said Jerry. "I'm only trying to find out a few things."

"Well, you come to the wrong counter if you expected to get anything from me," said Max. "I never know anything about trouble between people—because I begin to run as soon as I see it's going to start."

"It's too bad you lost that money," suggested Jerry.

"Well, what am I doing to get it back? Nothing. Not a thing. That's another way I am," said Max. "Maybe it's because I aint got no ambition, or nothing. I squeal, but I don't do anything about it."

"Somebody was telling me about Updyke being tied up a little way in the show thing," said Jerry.

"Updyke, eh? Well, if I was you, I'd do all I could to find out who that somebody was. And when I found him, I'd up and ask him about it. That'd keep you from bothering anybody else, maybe."

JERRY laughed. "I might do that," he said. "There's nothing like trying." He got up and buttoned his overcoat very carefully. "Well," he said, "if you can't do anything for the kid, I might as well keep moving. I might run into something that'll help, somewhere else." He was at the door and about to go when he added carelessly: "Seen anything of Farlen lately?"

"Farlen?" said Max, a trace of uneasiness in his manner.

"The drama editor of the *Globe*."

"Oh, him!" said Max. "No. I don't often see editors of papers. I always deal with the business office when I've got anything stewing."

"He was doing some work for Daniver in the proposed show, same as he did in the other, I've heard. Making contacts, sending out press stuff, and things like that. A clever fellow," said Jerry.

"I don't know anything about him," said Max Faxter.

"As I just said, he's out of my line."



THE PICKLED PEPPER was in one of those little streets that wind about in old neighborhoods—a place of narrow rooms, tables

with red-checked cloths, unframed canvases on the walls, and a more or less phony air.

So when Mickey telephoned Georgie Lotts at his gymnasium about her party, suggesting that he might care to go, Georgie at once said he would.

"Places like them aint any good for nice-looking kids without escorts," Georgie told her. "Guys make passes at them."

"Will you pick me up some place?" asked Mickey.

"Right at your house," said Georgie. "What time'll you want to start?"

"About eleven o'clock. The girls'll all be ready at that time; we'll go right around to the theater."

Georgie, blond and huge, tucked Mickey into a cab that night, and they drove to the theater. The performance was over, and the people concerned in it were straggling out a few at a time.

"Florrie, Jo and Isobel," said Georgie to the doorkeeper. "A couple of friends are waiting for them."

"In a minute. They left word," said the man.

In a very short time the three girls appeared, brilliant with make-up, and handsomely dressed.

"Mr. Lotts," said Mickey, presenting Georgie. "He teaches people to box and wrestle."

Isobel was small and dark; she had large eyes, and a snuggling manner.

"Oh, wrestling!" she said. "I'd love that. Do you ever teach girls, Mr. Lotts?"

"I never have; but also, I never turn any business away," said Georgie. "Any time you'd like a couple of lessons, let me know."

"You look terrible strong," Isobel said. "I'd be afraid of you."

"You needn't be," Mickey told her. "He's mostly show. Ever since they've started having him in the muscle ads, he's softened up a good bit."

"You know," said Florrie, as they went through the dark little street behind the theater, "I thought I'd seen you somewhere, Mr. Lotts. And that's where it was. In the bulging biceps department of some magazine."

"Yes, they had me in them places," said Georgie. "But their public wasn't for me, because I wasn't one of those statuesque sissies. I carry working stuff only. If a muscle aint one I can jump in with any time and start it singing. I don't waste any time bringing it forward."

A table had been reserved for them at the restaurant, and cocktails were brought in as soon as they sat down.

"And good, too," said Jo. She was a tall girl who always looked stunning at the end of a line.

"Mr. Lotts," said Isobel, "have you seen our show?"

"Not yet," said Georgie, "but I'm going to. It must be good, having you in it."

"A regular downright rascal, I calls him," smiled Florrie to Isobel. "Always keep your fingers crossed when the man is blond. It's a thing that shouldn't be."

There were several bright young men at a table opposite. One of them said to Jo:

"Drink up, and have another on this side of the house. There's nothing like making an early start."

Georgie frowned at the young man.

"This is a private party," he said, "and no buttin' in's required. So 'tend to your own drinking, fellah; we'll look after ours."

"Listen," said the young man, "no offense is meant."

"And we aint taking any—not yet. We're only telling you," said Georgie, "so you'll know."

"My gracious!" said Isobel, under her breath. "Isn't it amazing! He just bounces them right off the wall."

"Cafe society is a wonderful thing," said Florrie. "What would you do, Mr. Lotts, if the neighbors didn't behave?"

"I'd hate to sock anybody in the eye, right in front of ladies," Georgie said. "But sometimes when they won't be told, that's what you got to do."

"Well, you *are* a great protection," said Jo. "I wouldn't be afraid to go any place if you were along."

The Pickled Pepper was known for its pepper-pot; some was served them, and it shifted the talk to another level. Afterward they had some little saddles of fish, which increased the depth of the conversation. When the roast duck came in, and the various other things which the place underscored on its menu, the talk died down to a murmur. But when the wine appeared, a pint bottle before each plate, the enthusiasm became vocal once more. And when this had passed its peak, Mickey took occasion to say to Jo:

"You know, when you mentioned someone being a protection awhile ago, I couldn't help thinking about that poor Sue Tancree."

"Wasn't that just awful!" said Jo, awed. "I couldn't read it in the paper when Florrie showed it to me."

"I hope they get whoever done it," said Florrie.

"But look who they've arrested for it," said Isobel. "That poor Jessie Haldren! We were all with her last season in 'Starshine,'" she explained to Mickey. "And she was the nicest thing you'd want to meet."

"I've never seen her but once," said Mickey. "That was the other night at the Algerian Moon. She had a young man with her—of the name of Updyke."

"Oh, yes! Poor Frank! I wonder what he's thinking now," said Florrie.

"He can't be having a very good time if he was the boyfriend or something," said Georgie. "To have your girl hooked for murder aint no fun."

"Was he interested in her?" asked Mickey. "I mean, really?"

"He went overboard on sight," said Isobel.

"What a feeling that must be!" said Georgie. "I've often wondered what it'd be like."

"I introduced him to her at the first rehearsal of 'Starshine' he came to," said Florrie. "And just like Isobel says: down he went, and he didn't even have time to hold his nose."

"He was backing the show, wasn't he?" asked Mickey.

"I never heard he had anything in it," said Florrie.

"But that kind of stout fellah had," said Jo. "I heard that from Farlen one afternoon; I was talking to him while we were rehearsing. I don't remember what his name was,—to the other girls—"do you?"

But none of them did.

HE was only around a few times," Florrie recalled. "And he didn't talk much. I don't think he was like Updyke: in the thing to get a kick out of it."

"No," said Isobel, "he was a money guy. I could tell that by the way he looked at the props. Everything meant a dime or a dollar to him."

"I just couldn't stand the way he was all the time fussing with his nails," said Florrie. "I wondered if he'd never heard of such a thing as a manicurist."

"Some of them never have," said Isobel. "Though, just the same, I like them as well that way. Manicuring in a man makes me think the next thing might be a hair-do."

"Was Sue Tancree with the 'Starshine' company?" asked Mickey.

"She never played in it, but she was rehearsing when the show folded."

"I think," said Jo, "the trouble between her and Jessie started right there. Daniver got to like Sue an awful lot. He must have talked about her being better than Jessie, because I remember hearing some one say if Sue had been

working in the leading part, the show wouldn't have been a flop."

"I don't see how Daniver could have thought that," said Mickey. "If he'd thought she was a failure, why did he pick her to lead his second show?"

Jo looked very wise.

"There's a lot of things goes on," she said. "My idea is that Updyke had got behind Jessie, and they were going to float the new show on his money. And if he wanted Jessie to be tops, why, of course Daniver would say yes."

"We were talking about that only tonight," said Florrie. "And we thought something must have happened. Maybe Daniver got money from some other place, and Jessie was to be pushed out like she was before."

"Well, no matter what else happened," said Isobel, "I know Jessie didn't murder Sue Tancree; she wasn't wicked like that. She was nice."

"What was Tancree like?"

"Beautiful!" said Jo.

"Smart," said Florrie.

"Grand in a show," said Isobel. "Somehow, you always saw her. She made you look at her."

"I NEVER had anything against her," said Florrie. "But she did make you do a lot of other things besides look at her—things you didn't know you were doing. Did you ever notice, in rehearsals, how she'd work everybody aside? She wanted to be *it*; and she'd have worked Jessie out if the piece had lasted long enough."

"Do you suppose that feeling carried over from 'Star-shine' to the new show they were framing?"

"I don't see why it wouldn't," said Florrie. "From what I hear, Daniver still wanted Sue. Didn't he have her working for him at Greensleeves? What did that mean?"

"He was holding her," said Jo, "so's he'd be sure he'd have her when another time came. But maybe he couldn't get the money anywhere else, and had to work on Updyke. And when he got Updyke, he had to take Haldren."

"And then," said Florrie, "maybe that something I just mentioned, happened."

"But," said Isobel, "Jessie going after her, and stopping her on the road, and threatening her, as the newspapers say she did! And then maybe following her to that house! I can't believe it!"

"Besides," said Jo, "there was the window that was broken open. Was it Jessie did that?"

"I've been reading about this case," said Georgie. "When it comes to pushing open windows and rapping people over the head, you got to think about regular crooks. That's the way they work."

"Well," said Florrie, "it's got me stuck."

"You wouldn't think this Updyke had anything to do with it?" said Mickey.

"No, I wouldn't," said Florrie. "I think he is the easy-going kind that likes to be tight, but has no harm in him."

"I'd say that too," said Jo. "But at the same time, I'll say this: A man when he's on his own is a good bit different from one who has a wren to take care of. Updyke with a pleasant rankful and very little on his mind might be one thing; but with the same kind of a load, and seeing Haldren being pushed around, he might be another."

"But," asked Georgie, "would he sock a lady?"

"He never liked Tancree," said Isobel. "I always noticed that. She made one or two plays for him at the beginning. But these soft guys with money, and who are mostly liquored, sometimes are suspicious. Maybe he thought she was trying to shake him down."

"Anyway," said Isobel, "he never cared for her."

"But listen," insisted Georgie, "this fellah maybe didn't like her, but would he go as far as smacking her over the head with something?"

"I don't know," said Isobel. "Maybe that'd depend on what the thing was she done to him"



JERRY MOONEY was shaving next morning when his telephone rang. It was Mickey, and she said:

"Steve Curren has been on the telephone. He says they're going to resume on the Tancree case this morning. He thought you might want to be there. It's for ten o'clock."

"I'll be there," said Jerry.

His difficulties had always been with the Police Department. The county offices, like the sheriff's and the district attorney's, were always friendly.

Curren was already questioning Jessie Haldren when Mooney reached the offices. The first thing Jerry heard was:

"You were employed in this piece. And one night Daniver brought Miss Tancree backstage. Was Miss Tancree afterward employed in this play?"

"No."

"Was there any reason to suppose that she would be?"

"Yes, there was. She began rehearsing next day."

"What part in the play was she rehearsing?"

There was a moment's hesitation, and then Jessie Haldren said:

"It was the part I was playing."

"Did that indicate to you that she was to replace you?"

Again there was a hesitation. And then:

"Yes; it did."

Curren looked at some slips of paper he held in his hand. Jerry saw Frank Updyke standing near by; he was smoothing back his hair and moving uneasily. He leaned forward to speak to the girl, but a county officer prevented it.

Curren here resumed: "Was this musical piece 'Star-shine' abandoned before Miss Tancree had a chance to appear in it?"

"Yes; it was."

"Do you know why?"

"I only know that the show was losing money, and that they made up their minds not to go on."

"Do you know that after this, Miss Tancree was employed at Greensleeves?"

"Yes."

"Was there talk of producing another musical play?"

"Yes."

"Were you to play the principal part in that?"

"Yes."

"Do you know why you were at this time preferred over Miss Tancree?"

"Mr. Daniver offered me a contract. It was a good one. And I signed it."

"That is all you know?"

There was a shade of hesitation. And then she said:

"That is all."

"There was an occurrence at Greensleeves some days ago," said the assistant district attorney to Jessie Haldren. "It caused a good deal of excitement. You were there. Miss Tancree was there. Also there were a half dozen or so witnesses. Do you recall that Miss Tancree screamed; that you were seen to have a revolver in your hand; and that she accused you of attempting to shoot her?"

"Miss Tancree seemed to be very much excited that day," said the girl. "She made the charge during her excitement. If you have all the facts, you know she afterward withdrew it."

"Yes, she did," Curren nodded. "But the police were not very well satisfied with that." He stood looking at her, his brows lifted. "And what about the revolver? How did it happen that you had such a thing? It was found to be loaded. Witnesses saw it in your hand."

There was a pause here. And during this, Jerry saw the girl look toward Updyke; and when she turned her

eyes upon Curren once more, there was a set expression in her lovely face.

"I was frightened. I thought something was going to happen."

"What?"

"I don't know," she replied.

"A few days after the episode of the revolver," Curren said, "there was a thing happened in Sedley Road. You were driving a car. Witnesses say you ran another car to the roadside and stopped it. That you made threats to one of the occupants."

"I made no threats. I merely warned her to take care. For no one acting as she was acting could escape trouble. Her charging me with attempting to shoot her is an example of the kind of thing she was likely to do. My stopping her on the road came about this way: I'd been trying to see her, but was not permitted to do so. That afternoon I drove to Greensleeves' to make one more attempt. I saw her in another car; and I followed her."

"Who prevented you from seeing her?"

"Principally herself. But there were others, her friends and my own, who did all they could in various ways to prevent it."

"Had you any feeling of resentment against Miss Tancree?"

"I had. But nothing more than that."

"You did not like her?"

"It would not have been possible for me to like her. She was very unfair with me and took many tricky advantages."

After a short pause, Curren said:

"Do you care to say anything more along this line?"

"I would rather not."

"Or anything else?"

"No."

Curren conferred with another official, and then he said to Jessie Haldren:

"You are now to be taken into court for a hearing, Miss Haldren. If you desire to reconsider anything, you will then have a chance to do so."

"Thank you," said the girl.

WITHIN a half-hour the hearing had been held; and as the girl was led away, Jerry said to Updyke: "Too bad. But it'll not be for long."

Updyke's face was gray, and tight in expression.

"I can't bear to think of her being held here," he said. "My nerves are all jumping."

"Of course, being cooped up, even if the conditions are not so bad, ain't a pleasant thing. But don't forget, the whole thing could be much worse. She's out of the hands of the police, and that's a good bit. Curren, being a friend of mine, makes that all right." Jerry studied the white, drawn face of the young man, and said: "Don't you think you'd better have a lawyer? He could look after the legal side of this better than you can."

But Updyke shook his head.

"No," he said. "I don't want a lawyer. I hope to manage the matter myself."

"Listen," said Jerry, "do you feel that I am on Miss Haldren's side in this case?"

"Yes, I do," said Updyke. "So does she."

"Good enough. That makes it all pretty straight—as far as it goes." They took an elevator to the street level, and as they walked along outside, Jerry went on: "I've got some things out of this case; but not enough to let in much light on what's happened. Suppose you tell me a few more."

"I don't know much about it," said Updyke. "Not actually, I mean."

"Anybody that's in a thing," said Jerry frankly, "would say that. But what I'm hoping is that you'll do better. Keep it in your mind that the more you hold back, the

tighter the authorities'll shut the gate." They walked along for a space, and then he asked:

"What's this Daniver got to do with it?"

"Daniver," said Updyke, "is a filthy pup!"

"Yeah; but that'll not do any good by itself. What the pup's been up to is what'll count."

"He's a cheat," said Updyke. "And a liar. You never know how to take him. He's done some of the most infamous things!"

"For example?" But Updyke was silent. "Listen," said Jerry: "you've got to give—that is, if you expect to do anything useful. Just calling a party a dirty dog won't get you enough distance along the road to do the girl any good."

"I don't want to make it any worse for her," said Updyke. "And I'm afraid anything with Daniver in it as a talking-point is going to do that."

JERRY considered this.

"What I'm getting from that is something about the thing that used to be called a 'good name.' Maybe," he said, "this Daniver has lived with Haldren at some time or other?"

"No!" said Updyke, violently. "No!" His face was full of anger; his eyes blazed. "I'll not have anyone say that."

"Hold on!" said Jerry, unmoved. "Don't go up in the air. I'm trying to get something to work with; and if you'll not tell me, I've got to go feeling my way around."

"That thing's been said of her," said Updyke, and there was a shake in his voice. "And when I think of it, I could kill him!"

"Well, don't let that get past just thinking about it," said Jerry. "And don't let anyone hear you mention it." He put some of the rasp out of his voice, and continued. "Go back as far as you know, and let me hear all about Haldren. All about Tancree—all about Daniver. We've got to break this murder business down; and to do that, as I may have told you before, I've got to have the facts to stand on."

They went into a bar; and as they stood at the far end with the drinks before them, Updyke said:

"I first saw Jessie in Chicago. She was dancing at the Chanson Club. About six months before that, I'd come into a lot of money. I'd no idea how much. The will had held it out on me until I was twenty-five. I was drinking a good deal; and I had a gang around me that was trying to take all they could away with them when they left me."

"Jessie talked to me the last night of her engagement at the Chanson. She liked me, I think, and didn't want to see these people strip me. She told me to lay off the liquor, and to be careful."

"Nice of her," admired Jerry. "Some girls have a lot of sense."

"The next time I saw her was in New York. She was playing in 'Starshine.' She remembered me. And we got to be very good friends."

"Did you put any money into 'Starshine'?" asked Jerry.

"No."

"Do you know anyone who did?"

"Charley Fraden had a good deal in it. When the show was about to close, he wanted to get hold of more so he could keep it open. He asked me to lend him twenty thousand dollars. But I knew it would do no good, and refused."

"There's talk about a new show—that Haldren was to be in. Also to be done by Daniver. How did you stand in that?"

"I furnished half the money—providing Jessie got the leading part."

"Who was to put in the rest?"

"Daniver."

"Would you mind saying what you turned in?"

"A hundred thousand dollars."
"A tidy sum!" said Jerry, with upraised brows. "And did Daniver do the same?"

"I found out later that he did not."

"Is Fraden in this new project?"

"I don't know of anyone but Daniver."

"Has it ever struck you that Daniver having Tancree, a girl with a reputation as a public performer, as a model at Greensleeves, was an out-of-the-way kind of thing?"

"He explained that to me this way: He had taken her from a profitable spot with another show to appear in 'Starshine.' As it stopped before she had a chance to appear, he felt he ought to see her through until she got another engagement."

"Were you satisfied with that as an explanation?"

"I didn't think much about it. I wasn't interested in Daniver, or what he did. My purpose was to see that Jessie Haldren was given a chance; and this seemed to me as good a way as any."

"How long after you put up your money was it that you found Daniver hadn't shown his?"

"Two or three months. And then only by chance."

"Did you mention it to him?"

"I more than mentioned it. I raised hell about it."

"What did he say?"

"He told me that his money was tied up somewhat in his fur business, but that it would come through."

"You not knowing about his side of the money makes me think you haven't any of the handling of the show's finances."

"No; he did that."

"Did you ever think to look into the accounts and find out how it stood?"

"I did. And seventy-five thousand dollars of it was gone. That's really what I made the row about when I spoke to him."

"How long ago was this?"

There was now some hesitation in Updyke's manner.

"I don't just recall," he said. "But it was a little while back."

"Did Jessie Haldren know about it?"

"I never told her."

Jerry studied the young man. It was quite plain that a lack of candor had begun to show itself in his answers; and in the Mooney procedure this was always a signal that questioning should, for the time being, cease.

"It's too bad," he said, "that you weren't in touch with Haldren the day she followed Tancree out along the Sedley Road. You might have stopped a lot of trouble."

"I suppose," said Updyke, "she thought she was doing what was best."

"She said she was giving Tancree a chance. Have you any idea what that was about?"

"They were, in a sense, rivals, and I suppose there were a good many bitter things between them that would seem of little importance to anyone else."

CHAPTER TWELVE



AFTER Jerry Mooney had left Updyke, he stepped around to the office of the *Evening Globe*. He found Farlen, the drama editor, in his office, with a heap of New York newspapers before him.

"Hello," said Farlen as he looked up. He pushed his eyeshade up on his forehead and examined Jerry. "What's new?"

Jerry sat down at the side of the desk.

"Haldren had a hearing this morning," he said. "They're holding her."

Farlen sat back in his chair. His brow was furrowed; his lean jaws were working as though he were chewing at something.

"That's too bad," he said.

"I was listening in on the district attorney's examination," Jerry told him. "She didn't say much that did her any good."

"They seldom do," said Farlen. "People who are picked up for crimes seldom favor themselves in examination. It seems to me the best thing they could do is keep their mouths shut."

Jerry began questioning Farlen about his work with the production of "Starshine." Farlen, it seemed, was a sort of adviser; also he did the press work. He was paid by Fraden. Daniver had engaged Jessie Haldren at Farlen's suggestion. It was true that he meant to drop her afterward. He'd seen Tancree in a road show and greatly admired her work. "Starshine" was about to fold, but Tancree talked him into thinking she could step in and save it. He gave Haldren notice, started Tancree rehearsing, and went to Fraden for more money.

Fraden had thought the play hadn't a chance. But now he surprised everyone by changing his mind. When Haldren heard what was going on, she was astonished and hurt. She'd had fine personal notices. But when the theatrical papers said Tancree was being rushed into the play to save it, she was angry.

"The great trouble now," said Farlen, "is that all this will be brought out and used against her."

"This young fellow Updyke is all ready to start a defense," said Jerry. "He's got the money, and he'll dig deep."

There was a shadow upon Farlen's face at this, and a slight curl of his thin lip.

"I hope," he said, "she'll not have to depend on anybody like that. A playboy that'd be more than likely to be drunk at a time when he was needed!"

Jerry talked over the different points of the case he thought the drama editor might know something about, and by and by he left the office. Standing by the elevator cage at the end of the corridor, waiting to descend, he saw young Dave Miller, the paper's police reporter.

"I saw you in City Hall today, old-timer," said Dave. "Looks like you had some interest in this Heron House case."

"Yeah. I'm looking into it a little," said Jerry.

"If you'd hung around awhile longer, you'd heard that last bit of news that was brought in to Pash."

"What was that?"

"About Jessie Haldren being seen on the Sedley Road at what must have been only a little while before she stopped the car Sue Tancree was in."

"Is that supposed to be important? She doesn't deny she was on the road."

"Yeah, but she didn't say she had somebody with her."

"Who was it?" asked Jerry, his ears up.

"I just now saw you come out of the guy's office," he told Jerry.

"It wasn't Farlen!"

"The report says it was!"

In a little while, Jerry was in his office in the Etruria Tower, and had Steve Curren, assistant district attorney, on the telephone.

"What's this I hear about Farlen of the *Evening Globe*?" he asked.

"Do you mean in the Heron House business?"

"Yes."

"There's a pair of witnesses came in—to the police. A woman who knows Farlen by sight, and a man who doesn't know him at all. They saw pictures of Jessie Haldren in the newspapers and remembered seeing her in a gray car about a mile or two below Vernon station. The time for this has been fixed by the police at not more than ten

minutes—probably less—before the time she stopped the other car on the Sedley Road. The woman recognized the man as Farlen. Pash showed the man a dozen or so photographs, all spread out on his desk; the man picked out Farlen without hesitation.

"Could you give me the names of these two people?"

"I'm sorry, but neither the names nor the addresses have been passed on to this office as yet."

"All right, Steve. Many thanks." Jerry put down the telephone, and considered. Then he had Mickey call Police Headquarters. "Jerry Mooney," he said. "Find out if Pash can find one of his rare moments."

IN a few moments the voice, resonant and full of metal, ground in his ear.

"Pash speaking. What do you want?"

"Just to bid you the time of day, old chap, and ask about this Farlen discovery."

"You'll get nothing from me," said Pash. "About that, or anything else."

"There's such a thing as that one called ingratitude," said Jerry. "Don't forget the two or three dozen finished cases I've passed on to you, all done up in cellophane, as they say."

"You've had your own reasons for everything of that kind you've ever done," said Pash. "I've never been fooled into thinking you had any generous intentions."

"What were the names?" asked Jerry. "I understand it was a man and a woman who did the looking at Farlen."

"You've always said you were good at guessing," said Pash. "Guess this one."

"I hate to sit doing nothing, waiting for the evening papers to come out."

"They'll have very little," said Pash. "I'm not ready to give this information to the newspaper people or anyone else."

"If I'd only known about this, I'd have asked Farlen himself awhile ago when I was talking to him."

"What do you mean, you were talking to him?" Pash's voice lifted so suddenly that the telephone made it sound like a screech. "Let this be understood, Mooney: you'll keep away from the people figuring in this case, or I'll send a couple of men out after you."

"Listen, Pash," said Jerry agreeably, "don't do anything in a hurry. I don't want to seem like a show-off or anything like that, but you are always doing things that keep me calling attention to my license. You know what that is: it's a little paper that permits me to do things, and keeps your people off my back while I'm doing it."

"It don't give you a permit to break the law!"

"This fellah Farlen happens to be a person I know," Jerry told him. "And there's no breaking of laws in a quiet conversation between friends, is there? Or maybe they've changed that since the last time I looked."

"I know you, Mooney, and I know you can cover up your stuff in a lot of ways," Pash said. "But there're limits to everything. I'm not going to let you interfere with this case. I know you've got a gag ready to pull on me: that this girl's Joe Haldren's daughter, and so forth. But who a person is makes no difference with the homicide squad while I'm running it."

"All right; I just thought I'd try a little sociable coöperation," said Jerry. "But of course if you'll not play, there's no use bothering."

After this Jerry got the *Herald* and asked for the City Room.

"Joe High," he said to the person who answered. "Say it's Jerry Mooney." And in a few moments the good-natured hail of the *Herald's* city editor came over the wire.

"How are you, fellah! What's the quick-stepping cop doing today?"

"Hello, Joe. As mostly, I'm working on a little case. This Sedley Road business."

"Oh, yes: That's growing. Something coming in every now and then. Are you getting anything we don't have?"

"Not yet; but I will be soon. I'll let you know. But just now you might have something I'm wanting: those people who saw Farlen with Haldren."

The *Herald's* city editor laughed.

"The homicide people wouldn't give us anything on them; but our City Hall man sleuthed around a little and got them as they left the building. They told him all."

"Good work," praised Jerry. "Who and where are they?"

"The woman is a Mrs. Bertha Salzman. She's in wholesale millinery: operates under the name of Salzman & Company. The man's her designer—named Edmond Openworth." He gave Jerry the address.

Jerry had a sandwich and a cup of coffee at an automat. Then he went to the building where Salzman & Company were located on the fifth floor; and in a few moments he was explaining his errand to the proprietress.

Mrs. Salzman was stout, and quite good-looking in a plentiful sort of way; and she was talkative.

She had been driving with Edmond for relaxation. Pressure was sometimes very heavy. Fresh ideas were needed: new shapes, new trimmings, new blends. They'd taken a book of sketches. She'd recognized Farlen and Miss Haldren. Haldren's picture had often been in the papers. She knew Farlen as a play critic—and didn't like his opinions.

They'd seen the gray car while on their way back to the city. They'd gone to the police because the Rules in their talk with the police had said there was only one person in it. The police had asked Mrs. Salzman if she'd seen another car at Heron House. But they hadn't been as far as that. They'd cut through a lane which was to the south of the house.

As a matter of fact, they had passed through the lane twice that afternoon. There was a spring. They'd stopped to drink the water and left the sketch-book behind them. It had all their new designs in it. They'd returned for it.

"Lucky," said Jerry. "There might have been someone chanced along and picked it up."

"I don't think there are many people use that little road," said Mrs. Salzman. "But now I think of it, we did see a car there that time. There was something happened to it."

"Did you notice the person who'd been driving it?" asked Jerry.

"There were two men."

Jerry felt a lift to his spirit. Here it was! The chance thing he'd been hoping for.

"I'm interested in those parties," he said.

Mrs. Salzman said there was something wrong with one of the car's tires. The men were bending over it, rather discouraged-looking. The one who was working with it was tall and rather young. He was blond.

"I noticed that because he had no hat. The other one was older—rather stout, and wore one of those ugly derbies."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN



AFTER finishing with the two milliners, Jerry entered a cigar store and dialed a telephone number. Then he said:

"Hello, is that you, Carey? This is Jerry Mooney. . . . Pretty good, thanks. And if you're not too busy, I'd like you to look me up a license number." He referred to a little book he'd taken from his pocket. On the open page was the number given him by Sog Finny at Andrews' garage. He repeated it to Carey.

"It might take a little while," said Carey. "Will you hold on, or shall I call you?"

"I'll wait awhile," said Jerry. He stood in the booth for a space. Then a man's voice sounded in his ear.

"Jerry, your number is a Packard car. Owner, F. B. Updyke." He added the young man's address.

"O. K., old top," said Jerry. "Ever so much obliged."

He hung up and went out. A few minutes later he was in Charley Fraden's office. The gambler nodded placidly as he sat at his desk.

"Hello, Mooney," he said.

Jerry sat down.

"I was in the neighborhood," he said, "and I thought I'd stop in. A little cheerful conversation always helps things along."

FRADEN examined his nails; those of his left hand seemed not to have the desired luster, and he bur-nished them lightly on his coat-sleeve.

"What have you in mind?" he asked.

"The last time I was here," said Jerry, "I was on the subject of Updyke. And I'm still more or less on him. I've had some more talk with him about this Tan-cree-Haldren case. He's in what you'd call a state of mind."

"I think he's kind of nuts about that girl," said Fraden.

"So it seems," Jerry said. "There are indications that point that way." He crossed his knees and dangled one polished shoe. "I saw him at City Hall today while the D. A.'s office was questioning the girl. He took it hard."

"Yeah," said Fraden. "So he would. He's one of the kind that weren't brought up to rough usage."

"Have you heard they are holding the girl?"

"So the papers say. But she never killed Sue Tan-cree. The police ought to see that."

"One of the troubles with them," said Jerry, "is that they don't take anything but facts as evidence. And facts," he said, "aint always what they ought to be."

The left-hand nail had attained a state of brilliancy that seemed to give Fraden a good deal of satisfaction. He gave his attention altogether to Jerry.

"What's Updyke saying about it?" he asked.

"Mostly in the key that he'd like to do something. He's sort of taken me on to try and find out about things. I mentioned a lawyer as a kind of handy party on the side, but he'd not listen to it. He said lawyers ask questions."

"So they do," agreed Fraden. "I keep away from them myself. If I get one that knows the trick, he learns a couple of new ones after he's worked with me awhile. And then he starts asking for some kind of a split in the business."

Jerry grinned.

"There's trouble everywhere you turn," he told Fraden. "But just the same, if you're dealing with the law, there ought to be a lawyer somewhere around. Updyke's got dough; and he aint safe working on his own."

"As I told you, he's careful," said Fraden. "And when you're that way, you reduce possibilities about fifty per cent."

"He talked with me about Haldren—about how he first met her, and things like that. He gave me some information, but not much. There were places where I could feel he was hushing things up. He didn't say anything much about his money affairs with Daniver. Also he got very tongue-tied when I tried to get him into some other places."

"I've told you he's careful," said Fraden.

"He said he hadn't any money at all in that other production, 'Starshine.' As I've heard that Daniver seldom works with his own money in anything but the fur business, I've been wondering who was really behind that."

"I couldn't say," Fraden told him placidly. "I had a trifle in it, but if it wasn't Daniver carried the thing, I don't know who it was."

"I wonder if you've heard the news about Farlen?"

"Yes, I have—on the radio. I wonder what the chances are that these people who say they saw him only think they did?"

"I wouldn't know," said Jerry. "As you say, it looks funny." He cocked an eye at Fraden. "Farlen knows Haldren, don't he?"

"Yes, he does. Ever since 'Starshine.' Daniver had him as a sort of adviser with that show. He knows the business, and Daniver doesn't. He was around a good bit while rehearsals were going on; and he liked Jessie. When he heard of Daniver bringing in Tan-cree, he was sore. I remember him saying that the idea of dropping Jessie out to put Tan-cree in was dumb. I don't think he had much of an opinion of Daniver, anyhow. His idea was that the fur man was a stagestruck amateur hoover."

"That might be right; but they say he does pretty well at it." Jerry looked at the polish on his shoe; he twisted his foot this way and that so he'd have a better view. And then he said: "When I talked with Farlen last, I got the idea he didn't care too much for Updyke."

"Yeah, I've thought that too. But I didn't give much time to it. When you've got a roulette-wheel, four crap-tables and a poker-room to run, you aint got much time for other people's business."

"You wouldn't think he looked at Updyke as a rival—I mean in the matter of Haldren?"

"Maybe so. As far as I could see, he had a lot of interest in her."

"What'd he think of the other one?"

"Ol Tan-cree?"

Jerry nodded, and Fraden lifted his brows.

"Well, I wouldn't care to give any opinion on that," Fraden answered. "He's going to have the homicide cops and the D. A.'s young men on his neck, maybe, before the day's over. And it's no time to say things."

"Yeah, I see what you mean," Jerry clasped his hands about his knee. "If they can establish what these witnesses say, as the truth, Farlen might be in for a kind of a sleigh-ride." Jerry's eyes, drifting thoughtfully about the office, saw on the wall a picture of a race-horse, of a billiard champion, a colored print of Epsom Downs on race day. In a corner was a clothes-tree. Then he thought of Rule, the basket-maker, who had seemed a mild sort of person; but there had been a firmness in his look that Jerry thought could easily turn to stubbornness if he thought his word was being doubted. Also, there was Edmond Openworth, who, in spite of his millinery characteristics, could easily turn out to be a person with fixed ideas.

MRS. GILPIN had said the man she'd seen on Sedley Road had been tall, rather young, and wore no hat. One of the men in the lane, fretting over the deflated tire, had been tall and young; he also had worn no hat. Rule had said the man who'd asked to use his telephone was somewhat stout and wore a black derby, which he thought rather smart-looking. Mrs. Saltzman, too, had noticed a stoutness in the man, and also remembered the derby, although her opinion of it was not so favorable.

Jerry went on talking with Fraden. But as he did so, the questions and responses did not register as definitely with him as such things usually did. For at the back of his mind he kept seeing that license number, Updyke's number. He kept seeing Updyke himself: tall, rather young, and who never wore a hat. And sitting in a desk chair, only a few feet away, was Fraden, more or less stout and commonplace; and on the corner clothes-tree hung a black derby.

To be sure, there were probably many tall young men who were blond and who had the no-hat habit. Also there were many, not so young, who were heavy at the waist, and who wore black derbies. However, there was only one State car license with that number.

Jerry, as he walked along the street after leaving Fraden's place, kept these things in mind; they were among the elements which had been drawing closer and closer together for some hours. The young man Mrs. Gilpin had seen on the road on the day of the murder at Heron House, the one Sog Finny had seen with the car in the lane and the one both Mrs. Salzeman and Edmond Openworth had seen in the same place might very well have been Updyke. And the man in the black derby might have been Fraden.

"Haldren was out on Sedley Road, following Tancree," Jerry told himself. "Updyke may have been, for some reason, following her. But why Fraden—if it was Fraden?"

HE recalled that when the milliners saw the car in the lane two men were with it. When the trouble-shooter, Finny, arrived to replace the damaged tire, there was only one. The other, the one with the derby, had gone hunting a telephone. How long he'd been gone, Jerry had no way of judging. But it was possible it had been some time. Perhaps long enough for Updyke, with other matters bearing down on him, to become restless and go searching for him. For when Mrs. Gilpin saw the hatless young man, he'd been peering through the evergreens; he was looking toward Heron House.

"It might be he expected to see Fraden," thought Jerry. "But I don't know; it'll need more going over."

He stopped at the Terminal station and called Mickey.

"Has Chubby said anything lately?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered. "A half-hour ago. He telephoned he'd be at Sid's place for the rest of the afternoon if you needed him."

"Right," said Jerry. He was about to put down the telephone, when Mickey said:

"There was a call just after you'd left. Miss Edleigh."

"Anything special?"

"She didn't say. But if I'm a judge of telephone voices, she's got a load of something on her mind. She said she wants to see you just as soon as you get the message."

"Maybe her nerves have gone a little shaky," said Jerry. "I ought to have got in touch with her. But I'll stop at the hotel on my way down."

He called Sid's basement restaurant, and Chubby was speaking to him in a few minutes.

"Pay attention," said Jerry. "Go around to Fraden's tonight and get in one of the games. Ask a question here and there. But go easy. I want to know if Fraden was away on the afternoon of the Sedley Road affair. If so, I'd like to know if he was with Updyke. Get talking to someone who knows and who'll be likely to say something. How close is he to Updyke? Did he get the money he put into that 'Starshine' show from Max Faxter? Has he paid any of it back? How does he stand with Daniver? And any other little thing you can pick up along those lines might be a help."

"O. K.," said Chubby. "But listen: it'll take some cash capital to get into any of the Fraden games."

"Get it from Sid—twenty bucks. Tell him I'll settle with him tomorrow."

Leaving the station, Jerry went to the Russel-Alwyn, called Zoe Edleigh's apartment, and in a few minutes was in her presence. Dr. Pierce was also there; and as Jerry shook hands, he noticed a pervading air of anxiety.

"What's been happening?" he asked.

Zoe, curled up in a big chair, smiled wanly.

"I'm afraid I've got myself in for something," she said.

Jerry sat down, and his eyes had the steady look of inquiry. "You haven't been talking?" he asked.

"No; oh, no!"

"Well," said Jerry, "tell it! Here I sit, listening!"

"About noon today," said Zoe. "I had a telephone call. She paused, and then added: 'From Greensleeves.'"

"No!" said Jerry.

"Asking," said Zoe, "if I could find a convenient ten minutes for calling at their place of business. The object being to arrange settlement for goods purchased."

There was a moment's silence; Jerry looked from one to the other of them.

"Was it Daniver made the call?"

"No. It was a woman's voice."

"What did you reply?"

"For a moment, I couldn't say anything. But fortunately, I soon got control of myself. I said I supposed there was a mistake—that I'd had no transactions with Greensleeves lately; indeed, I doubted if I'd ever had any."

"Good enough," said Jerry. "You have a fine, natural technique. The thing to do when in a jam is deny everything."

"I had misgivings about this adventure from the start," said Pierce. "You are too well known," he said to Zoe.

"In a thing like this there'd almost surely be someone who recognized you."

"I don't see how they could," said the girl. "I looked in the mirror at the make-up and didn't recognize myself."

Dr. Pierce shook his head.

"Your face is not the whole story," he said. "There is general conformation. There is carriage. There are natural mannerisms. Some one at Greensleeves marked one or more of them that day, perhaps only casually. But when the news of the murder came out, the resemblance was recalled and spoken of."

Jerry nodded.

"I've heard of things like that," he said. "But for Greensleeves to go this far in the matter would take more than a little talk, like 'I think she looked like so-and-so.' That could have been the beginning; but they must have done a good bit of searching to get to the place where they picked up the telephone and made the call."

"I think," said Zoe, "if I let myself go, I'll be afraid."

"Well, hold on tight," said Jerry. "Keep your nerves in order. Nine-tenths of any kind of fighting is done on that spot. At first you must face them down; afterward, when you get some idea how they stand, you begin to carry the battle to them."

"The matter of the fur wouldn't be so bad," said Zoe. "I think I'd rather enjoy being taken into court and putting the whole matter before the public."

"LISTEN," said Jerry, "they'd never give you the chance to show Daniver up. What he'd done would be ruled out. Don't forget, you'd be on trial—not him."

"We'd be able to squeeze in some hints of his filthy fraud," said Zoe. "I'd be willing to take a chance on that. But this murder—I don't like that at all."

"Nor I," said Pierce. "I wish," he added, "I'd kept this matter of the woman and her children quiet. I should have known an attempt like this would be dangerous."

"Please, Joe," said Zoe, rising and going to him, "don't blame yourself. That part of it was my idea, not yours."

"Now, look," said Jerry Mooney, "here we are in this thing, and we're starting off being scared at the first sign of something threatening us. What's needed right now is confidence. The Greensleeves thing has been laid down; we'll pick it up—in our own way—and see what they'll do about it."

"That sounds very sturdy," said Zoe. "But what 'our own way' would be, I don't know."

"If you go right to them," said Jerry, "it'll save time and show at the start that nobody's kidding you. What I'd like to see you do is call Greensleeves in the morning and ask what transactions you've had with them. That'll make them put up or shut up. If they don't come right to the line, tell them you can't be bothered, and hang up."

"And then?"

"If they feel really sure of anything, they'll call again."

"But," objected Dr. Pierce, "suppose they do not? Suppose they take their suspicions to the police?"

"They'll not," said Jerry, confidently. "If they'd any thought of that, they'd done it in the first place."

"But," said Zoe, "suppose they do call again?"

"Then you'll tell them you are putting the matter into the hands of someone who will take it up with them. After that, call my office, and I'll get moving."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN



JERRY slept late the next day. And before he'd left his apartment, Chubby came ringing at his bell.

"To start with," said

Chubby, sitting down, a grin on his round face, "there aint no bill for money lost at Fraden's. I win sixty bucks."

"Nice luck," said Jerry approvingly.

"I gave Sid back the twenty," said Chubby. "With the rest, I'm paying off some outstanding bills."

"What'd you do with the couple of things I gave you to work on?"

"Well," said Chubby, "seeing I had some encouragement, I got at that right soon. As you said, I had to play it careful, because the people who work for Fraden are always looking for something underneath what you're saying. But I've got things more than once from old Freddy, the chef; so around about eleven o'clock I tipped him a dollar and had a dish of stewed oysters. And we got onto some topics that I thought might lead to what you wanted."

"Freddy's steady grouch is that his department don't get enough attention from the boss. I found that Fraden was away on the afternoon of the murder. Freddy remembered it, because there was a lot of things needed for the kitchen that day, and no one was around to O. K. the order. When Fraden got back, it was late—about five o'clock—and Freddy even then couldn't get his attention. Fraden was all steamed up about something. A couple of times when Freddy went into the office he was told to get the hell out."

"You know," said Chubby, "that fellow Sush? He's the shine-and-brush boy. He's in and out and around a good bit, and he likes conversation if it aint personal with the place. If you ask questions, he don't know from nothing. But if you work with him, he's got plenty. He told me Fraden and Updyke are pretty friendly—especially Fraden. And Fraden owes money to Max Faxter, and Max keeps wanting it back. Sush thinks it must be quite a bagful to make Max holler that loud. I couldn't get anything much about Daniver. He comes in once in a while and rolls the bones, which I hear is his favorite way. Him and Fraden are pretty good friends, but Updyke seems to stand best."

Jerry didn't get much help from this. And he said to Chubby:

"How hard would it be for you to get photographs of Updyke and Fraden?"

"Maybe easy. There's one of Fraden on the wall of a bowling alley I know of. It could be snitched. And a playboy like Updyke ought to have a picture in the files of some newspaper."

"Have a try at them," said Jerry. "And I'd like to have them soon."

When Jerry reached his office in the Etruria Tower, Mickey said:

"Miss Edleigh just spoke. And she left word to call her as soon as you got in."

In a few moments Jerry was speaking to Zoe Edleigh. "You called those people, I suppose," he said. "What was their reply?"

"I told them that I'd looked through my accounts, and as expected, could find no transactions of any sort that I'd

had with their house. Then I quite sharply put down the phone. Almost an hour went by, and then they called me. The matter was a thing of special interest, they said. There was definitely a transaction between us—and no further back than on a day of the present week. It would be to my advantage to see them. If I did not, they'd take steps."

"Yeah," said Jerry. "And then you said?"

"That I couldn't be annoyed. That I would put the matter in the hands of a person who'd take it up with them. And not to bother me any more about it."

"Very nice," said Jerry Mooney approvingly. "That sets the stage for me. I'll happen in on them sometime in the course of the day. After that we'll know more about it."

"What do you mean to do?" asked Zoe hesitatingly.

"That," replied Jerry, "I'm not sure of; I seldom am, at the beginning of anything. I wait and see what the other party's going to do. I try to sense out what he's holding. If I can do that, then maybe I begin to play my top cards."

"Joe's terribly worked up about this," said Zoe. "He keeps thinking my getting into it was his fault."

"Let's forget whose fault it was," Jerry advised her. "We'll just push along and see what we can do; and my opinion is we'll do a good deal."

After this conversation, Jerry looked over his mail. He smoked a cigarette, and reviewed the events of the day before. Things seemed to be taking form: they were drawing together in a way he'd so often seen the elements of a case do. They were melting. No longer a group, but becoming, somehow, one thing.

"But just as hard to hang a judgment on," Jerry grumbled. "One piece, but awful thick, and with all the gravy inside."

Well, he'd cracked other cases, and he supposed he'd be able to do the same with this one. The thing that troubled him most was keeping Zoe out of it. That would have to be done. Because, as much as anything else, he'd got her into it. Of course, she'd been thrilled with the idea, and had suggested it herself; but he could have stopped it all if he'd wanted to. And he hadn't wanted to. He'd seen a chance of putting something over, and he'd—well, maybe he'd taken advantage of her.

Anyway, there she was, in it up to her neck; and this Daniver party knew it!

"My job," Jerry told himself, "is to shake him loose. I don't know how tough he is, but I'll go around there and find out."

He rubbed the fire from the cigarette, and got up. In the outer office Mickey said to him:

"Is there something going on in this Zoe Edleigh business?"

"Yeah. But I don't think it's much. Why?"

"I heard you in there muttering to yourself like *Macbeth* or somebody, just before the murder."

"I was going over a few ideas," said Jerry, grinning. "I hope I didn't disturb you too much."

"Listen," said Mickey, "don't forget this case is serious; and if you're caught in it—even on the outskirts of it—it's going to do you no good."

"We don't have to argue about that," Jerry assured her. "I'm still awake. And I'm stepping out to take a look at whatever it is that's turned up."

GREENSLEEVES was in the center of town, and at this hour it was operating largely and smoothly. There were not the crowds one might see in establishments dealing in other sorts of merchandise; but they were large in a money way; the voices in the place were as smooth and rich as the wonderful furs that were being shown.

Jerry inquired for Mr. Daniver. An elderly person in a morning coat and with carefully creased striped trousers, examined him minutely.

"Did you wish to see him on business?"

"Yes."

"Might I inquire its nature?"

"Maybe not," said Jerry. "What I've got to say'd sound best if said to him."

The elderly person seemed dubious; nevertheless he pressed a button at the side of his desk. A man who looked like a store detective appeared. He was large, had hard eyes and an overbearing manner.

"Something for me?" he asked.

"Mr. Pell, this gentleman would like to see Mr. Daniver on some unstated business."

The hard eyes of Pell looked at Jerry; there was an immediate addition to the overbearing manner.

"This way," he said.

He led Jerry to the back of the establishment, through a doorway, and into a small office. After he'd closed the door, he said:

"What'd you like to see Mr. Daniver about?"

"It probably wouldn't interest you," said Jerry. "I'd say it was a private matter between him and me."

"Then it's not business?"

"Oh, yes. Greensleeves says it is, anyway."

"What's the name?" asked the man, intolerantly.

"Mooney."

Pell left the office, and in a few moments returned.

"Mr. Daniver says he doesn't recall having any business with you," he told Jerry.

Jerry took a notebook from his pocket and penciled the name "Zoe Edleigh" on a page which he tore out and handed to the man.

"Take that to him," he said. "Maybe he'll see me, after all."

The hard-eyed man looked at the slip of paper and again left the room. When he returned, he said shortly: "This way."

Jerry followed him down a brightly lighted passage and into a showily furnished office, the walls of which were covered with photographs of theatrical personages. Daniver sat at a large shining desk, looking dapper and sleek. He nodded to Pell, who withdrew.

"Will you sit down?" he said.

Jerry drew up a chair and sat facing the turrier.

"Nice of you to see me," said Jerry agreeably. "For a minute or so it looked as though I was going to have trouble about it."

"I didn't recall your name," said Daniver.

"Yes," smiled Jerry, "that sometimes happens. But the other name must have seemed different."

DANIVER picked up the slip of paper and looked at it. "Zoe Edleigh," he read. And he glanced at Jerry. "I seem to remember it," he said, "but can't place it."

"She had a telephone call from Greensleeves yesterday. Also one this morning, asking her to call."

Daniver turned to an interoffice telephone.

"Let me have Miss Teller, please." Then, in a moment: "Miss Teller, is there a Zoe Edleigh figuring in any immediate business?" He listened; Jerry watching him, saw his attention seemed to increase. And after a moment or two, he said: "Very well." Then he turned from the instrument, and settled back in his chair.

"Yes," he told his caller, "there is a Zoe Edleigh who came up for attention in the office a day or two ago. And I've just heard they telephoned her." He looked at Jerry interestedly. "Are you representing her?" he asked.

"Yes; she called me, and said it might be as well to step around here and see what was going on."

"You are an attorney?"

"No. Investigator would be more like it."

"I see." Daniver had written a few lines on a desk-pad while listening to the voice on the telephone, and he now looked at these. "There is a matter of a fur coat," he said. "Bought some four days ago. The price was fifteen thou-

sand dollars. The terms were cash, as we did not know Miss Edleigh. Through some misunderstanding—and the store is a little puzzled about how it happened—the money was not paid." He put the pad down, and added: "We thought it was some sort of oversight. Things like that are always happening."

"Yes," Jerry said. "I often run into them myself. They make up a good part of my business. But this one's clearly a mistake. Miss Edleigh told me, when I questioned her, that she's had no business dealings with Greensleeves."

THE turrier smiled. "Her memory is short, perhaps," he said.

"I've been employed by her before, and her memory has always been good," Jerry told him. "Another thing: it's not every day a woman buys a coat at the price you just mentioned. And if she did, it's not likely to drift out of her mind right away."

"Not usually," said Daniver dryly.

"I've had a positive statement from her that she's not bought anything at Greensleeves at this or any other time."

"We have a policy here," said Daniver, "that calls for careful treatment of things of this kind. We've found that harsh methods are not best. Miss Edleigh positively purchased the coat, and as far as we know, still has it in her possession. Upon investigation, we found she has a good deal of means. It would be very easy to appeal to the law and get a judgment against her."

Jerry considered this with puckered brows.

"Would you mind," he said finally, "if you went over the details of this buy? When was she here? Who sold the coat to her? Who delivered it, and when? I've got to go back to her with a complete report. Your saying she bought and didn't pay won't be enough. She's already denied both these things. What say if you give me something new?"

"Your experience with things of this kind, or like them," said Daniver, "must show you that people who would be likely to try to get the best of establishments like Greensleeves are very clever. They have a variety of tricks—"

But Jerry's waving hand stopped him.

"You're now talking about crooks," said Jerry. "Miss Edleigh, as you've just mentioned, is a person of large means. She has a place in the public picture. She'd not be likely to do a thing like this to get something she could buy very easily."

Daniver shook his head.

"I have been giving you credit for a larger experience than you seem to have had," he said. "Some of the most startling thefts of this kind have been the acts of persons—mostly women—with large fortunes. Often the wives of millionaires. We put the necessary pressure upon them when the facts are at hand; but as I've already said, we do it gently. As soon as the situation becomes known to their families, the matter is usually settled and hushed up."

Jerry Mooney nodded agreeably.

"Yeah," he said. "I know about that. But this is different. This girl is not one of that kind. When she wants a thing, she puts the price on a line." He regarded Daniver with attention. "I asked at the Russel-Alwyn about deliveries made by Greensleeves," he said. "They had no record of any for some time. Not for anyone."

Daniver agreed to the likelihood of this.

"We have not said the fur was delivered to Miss Edleigh," he said. "As a matter of fact, she took it with her."

Jerry said nothing for a few moments. He dangled his foot and admired the polish of his shoe. But finally he spoke.

"Would you carry this thing into court?" he asked.

"If the usual procedure fails—we would."

"Then," said Jerry, "I'm afraid you'll have to do it. I went over the whole matter with Miss Edleigh; and a court action was one of the things we talked about. She said

she'd bought nothing and owed nothing, and if you insisted, she'd go into court with you any time you saw fit to start anything."

An ugly look appeared about Daniver's mouth.

"I'm surprised to hear that," he said. "Considering the circumstances attached to the purchase of the fur, I'd think she'd not want too much publicity."

"Publicity is a thing I always bring up before starting a proceeding," said Jerry. "If a client doesn't like it, or is afraid of it, I always advise them to compromise. But it seems that Miss Edleigh hasn't any feeling about it, one way or the other. She'll take it, or leave it."

"I would have preferred her coming here herself," said Daniver. "It would have made the discussion so much easier. There are things I could say to her that are impossible to say to anyone else."

Jerry leaned toward him in a companionable manner. "I've got the matter right in my hands," he said. "She gave me full authority. Anything you can talk about with her, you can talk about with me."

But Daniver gestured that this would not do. And he arose.

"See Miss Edleigh," he advised Jerry. "Tell her what I've said. Greensleeves will telephone her again—late today. And by that time I think she'll see things differently."

Jerry also got up.

"I'll speak to her," he said, "but I think what she'll say'll be the same as what she's already said. The easiest and cleanest way to sift the matter down," he added, cocking his eye at Daniver, "is the courts. You could bring suit and maybe get it through in a little while. From the way you talk, I think you've got a notion the thing is really on the criminal side of the line. So, why not go to the police? If you care to, I'll open it up, and afterward you can carry it along."

"It seems to me," the furrier said "you are acting in a peculiar way in this. I don't think it would be to your client's interest to go to the police."

"Sometimes it is," said Jerry. "I'm a great fellah for taking chances. As I've said to you, Miss Edleigh's not afraid of what could be called her good name. She's got the idea it's good enough to stand some kicking around. And it's my opinion she'd as leave have a criminal court as a civil one."

FOR a few moments Daniver was silent; then he said: "You seem to have the criminal idea fixed in your mind. What's behind it?"

"Maybe," said Jerry, "I'm more used to handling criminal jobs than the other kind. And always, if we know our work, we pick out a fighting ground we know most about."

"What has Miss Edleigh really told you?" asked Daniver.

"Everything," said Jerry. The furrier was looking at him through narrowed eyes, and Mooney met the look with agreeable candor. "I think I mentioned to you awhile ago that I never take cases unless the party makes a full statement to start with."

"We often require things in business," said Daniver, "and things are given us. Later we may find they're not what we've asked for."

"Never with me," Jerry assured him. "I was born sometime ago, and have always had my eyes open." He moved toward the office door. "You say," he added, as he stood with his hand on the knob, "you'll call Miss Edleigh later today. If you do, I think that'll mean to her that you are going further. I also think she's just the party to outsmart you by being a few steps ahead." He continued to stand, his eyes fixed on the man. "It might be a lot better for you to drop the thing. It'll surely not get you what you want. And it might—and keep this in mind—get you something you'll not want."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN



ERRY stopped in at a bar, a sporting place conducted by a man who once managed a string of "club fighters." And there

he saw Engle, Pash's favorite outside man, standing with a tall glass of ale before him.

"Hi-yah, fellah!" saluted Jerry.

"Hello," said Engle woodenly. "What's happening to you, Mooney?"

"Not too much. I could do with more," said Jerry.

"The old man's up to his neck," Engle informed him. "This Heron House thing's got him worried."

"Yeah; it sounds like a tough one," Jerry said. He ordered a hot brandy, feeling in need of stimulation. And he hovered over it, inhaling its fumes when it was put before him. "I've looked at it a little myself, and it's still very dark."

Engle sipped his ale.

"You've got a way of getting the Captain's goat," he told Jerry. "You rile him more than anybody else I know."

Jerry tasted the brandy. It was a trifle hot for drinking just yet, and he put the glass back on the bar.

"What's old Eagle-beak worked up about now?"

"He's heard you've been along Sedley Road asking questions. His idea is you're interfering with him."

"He's been thinking that about everybody for five years. It's a sign of age. Pash shouldn't be on the cops. He don't move fast enough, any more; and when anyone passes him, he gets thinking they're trying to get in his way."

"The car that this fellah Sog Finny did the tire work on in the road below Heron House belongs to Haldren's friend Updyke, don't it?"

"So it seems," agreed Jerry. The brandy was cooler now, and he tasted it with satisfaction. "I meant to speak to him about that, but I aint got to it yet."

"Pash had him up about an hour ago. Kind of blis-tered him, too."

"What's Updyke say?"

"He said he was driving around. Just like he often does. And he got the car into the lane so's it'd be out of the way while it was being fixed."

"And it seems that happened just about the time the other business happened?"

Engle nodded, and chuckled.

"It's funny about these stories people tell when you put them on a spot, aint it?"

"What's Pash think of it?"

"His idea is that Updyke was in on the killing."

"Maybe," suggested Jerry, "it was him broke the catch of the window and kicked out the foot-marks."

Engle caught the jeering note in this, and said:

"If you want an opinion, why don't you ask Pash about it? He always talks to you, don't he? Maybe this time he'll tell you a lot you haven't heard of."

Jerry grinned.

"If he had anything, I'd be the last one he'd show it to. But at that, I'll give him one more chance."

Fortified by the hot brandy, Jerry went on to City Hall. Berg sat at his desk as Jerry entered the office.

"Where'd you hop from?" Berg said. "I just this minute was calling your place." He took up the inter-office phone. "Here's Mooney, now," he said. And then to Jerry: "He wants to see you. But I think it's your usual beating."

"I'm not worrying," said Jerry. "I begin to put the gas-mask on in this building as soon as I pass the first floor."

Pash was smoking a cigar and writing notes in a book.

"I thought they said, at your place, that you weren't around."

"I wasn't," said Jerry. "I just chanced in, thinking to get a word with you."

"There's a lot of things having to do with you that just happen by chance," grumbled the Captain. He closed the book and looked at Jerry, chewing at the end of the cigar. "I suppose it was chance that took you along the Sedley Road lately?"

"No," said Jerry, leaning on the desk and looking very amiable. "That was all arranged. I went out to get some facts I thought might be useful. And believe it or not, I stopped here thinking I might drop a few of them off."

"I don't need them," said Pash. He bit viciously at the cigar and spat some of the severed pieces on the floor. "I had the office call you, because I had a question I wanted answered."

"Only too glad," said Jerry, "if it's one I can manage."

"You know the answer," said Pash. "Damn' well you know it! You found out that this party Updyke was on the Sedley Road on the afternoon of the murder. But you didn't report it. What I want to know is why you didn't."

"Well, for one thing, you put me out of step just about the time I might have told you. You remember, I asked about the Farlen witnesses, and you said I'd always claimed to be good at guessing, and told me to try and guess that one. Who knows but I had the Updyke information right on my tongue at that minute. But even if I had—how could I give you anything after that?"

"I've never been able to get the difference between this department and yourself into that big head of yours," said Pash. "We, in this place, are the law; and we're not supposed to give information to every Tom, Dick and Harry. On the other hand, you are obliged to tell us what you know: every citizen is."

"We've had this often enough before to have settled it," said Jerry. "If you'll give a listen back, almost anywhere along three or four years, you'll hear me telling you that you're not the law. You're a cop, and only that. And I'm still telling it to you."

"Listen," said Pash, exasperated, "if you know anything connecting this fellah Updyke with the Tancree murder, it was your duty to tell it."

"I don't know anything that would do that."

Pash shook a bony finger threateningly.

"Listen, Mooney: I don't want any ducking from under. This garage man, Finny, told me he gave you the number of the car he fixed that afternoon just down the road below Heron House. And I know you called up about it and were told it was Updyke's."

"Well, does being in the neighborhood of the place let a man in for a murder charge?"

"Updyke's a friend of Haldren's," rasped Pash. "Also, he was seen in the road near the house, watching it through the trees. Aint you got any sense? Can't you put one and one together, and make two? Or"—and his eyes glared through his big lenses—"are you working for this party and trying to cover him up?"

"I'm in this because it's a murder, and that's a kind of thing I always like to see cleared up. Besides, you've got Joe Haldren's daughter for it, and I want to see her get a fair shake. And to those two things you can stick the fact that nobody's paid me a dollar."

"If Updyke wasn't mixed up in the thing, what was he doing there?" demanded Pash. "Tell me that."

"How can I tell?" said Jerry. "I don't know. What kind of an answer did he give you when you asked him that?"

"He stalled. I couldn't make him talk."

"Have you still got him?"

"No. I tried to find something I could hold him on, but there wasn't anything big enough to outpull his money. He'd had the place full of lawyers, and they'd have licked me."

Jerry lighted a cigarette; he snapped the lighter off and stood looking at it for a moment. Then he said:

"What else did this Sog Finny tell you?"

Pash looked at him resentfully and didn't reply. "Did he say anything about Updyke having another person with him up there on the road?" Jerry persisted.

"No," Pash looked at Jerry with distrust lurking behind his lenses. "Do you know anything about anyone being with him?"

"Finny told me he remembered Updyke saying something about another party having gone to telephone the garage."

"He didn't mention that to me."

"Well," said Jerry easily, "when you see him again, you might ask him."

"I'll see him," snarled Pash. "I'll take him by the neck."

"I've thought about that other person a couple of times," said Jerry. "He hadn't got back by the time Finny was through with the tire job; my idea is that when old Mrs. Gilpin saw Updyke looking through the trees toward Heron House, he might have been out looking for his friend."

Pash drew on his cigar, and looked at Jerry.

"What do you think this unknown party was doing there?" he asked.

"I don't know that he *was* there. I'm just saying maybe."

"I'll go into this," said Pash, making a note in his book.

"We'll see what your 'maybe' comes to." He put down his pen. "It probably isn't much; if it was, you wouldn't be handing it to me."

Jerry grinned.

"O. K. But give it a try. You never can tell." He deadened his cigarette in a tray on the desk. "I hear the inquest is to be tomorrow morning."

"Yes," said Pash.

"I'll look in," said Jerry. "There might be something."

CHUBBY was at the office in the Etruria Tower when Jerry arrived.

"I've been here almost an hour," Chubby said when they were seated in the private office. "I didn't make out very well on the picture of Updyke. The newspaper morgues acted awful tight when I said I'd like to have one. But I've got the Fraden one that was at the bowling alley."

He opened an envelope and took out a photograph. It was of Fraden, and bore the inscription: "*To my old pal Rolly, from C. B. Fraden.*"

"Good enough," said Jerry, as he put it in a desk drawer. "Taken a few years ago, but quite all right for what I want."

"The other day you told me if I picked up any little thing, to bring it in," said Chubby. "So, listen to something funny: While I'm getting the picture off the wall at the alley, Pat Cicco sees me; and he laughs when I show him whose mug it is. He said it made him think of something. Pat has a store-and-office-cleaning business, and because he works at night, he has to take his sport by day. And what do I hear while I'm talking to him, but that Greensleeves is a customer of his. And when I hear that, I right away get talking about the murder, just on the chance there might be something."

"Yeah?" said Jerry, and looked at Chubby attentively.

"I find out Pat's got a contract with Greensleeves, for three scrub-women, and three hours work each night. The hours are between eleven and two, with him overlooking the job. He says he's there prompt every night, at the door in a little street at the back. He has a car fixed up for his business. Mops, pails, brushes, brooms and all the rest of the stuff. And the three women. A party named Pell lets them in, and they go to work. Sometimes, Pat says, Daniver, the boss, is there: maybe working late. But

not often. One night this week he was there. They could see a light in his office; and Pell, as he always does at such times, tells them not to bother with that spot until the next night.

"But," said Chubby, "this time there's not only a light in the office: there's also talk—loud talk! So loud, Pat says, he thought he'd have to jump in and separate somebody. This Pell," said Chubby, "right away gets the cleaning-women to another part of the place. Pat was talking to him about what they were to do, when who comes out of the office but Fraden—mad as hell about something, and cursing as he went out of the place by the back door."

"It would seem," said Jerry, "he'd been having a few words with somebody. But who, and what about?"

"I asked that, but Pat said he couldn't tell. I asked what night it was, and he kind of turned sour on me. He said he didn't know that, either. It was just as though he'd thought of something and didn't want to say too much. But he might as well have told me, for I knew it was the night of the murder just as plain as if he had."

"What else did he say?"

"Nothing. He shut up like a trap. As I say, maybe he remembered he'd been told to keep shut."

"I wonder," said Jerry, "if there'd be any chance getting in touch with any of the women that work for him? Suppose you look up the window-cleaners' local. I think they take in these women who clean business buildings. Maybe they could give you the names of the women who work for Cicico. If you get anything, telephone it in to the office. Mickey'll make a note of it if I'm not here. I can pick it up when I come in."

When Chubby left, Jerry sat on the end of Mickey's desk and watched her rapid fingers tap the keys. By and by she paused, sat back in her chair and pushed her hair back from her eyes.

"How'd you do today?" she asked.

"I've seen some people," he said. "And I've done a lot of talking. And things are shaping up. In a day or two, I wouldn't be surprised if I wasn't ready to stand right out and say something."

"What'd Zoe Edleigh want?"

"She's in a little trouble. In this visit she made at Greensleeves, somebody must have spotted her. Anyway, they started to think, after she'd gone, that she might be who she is. And they've called her on the telephone, asking her to come in sometime soon. And settle!"

Mickey's eyes opened wide.

"That could be serious," she said.

"It is serious. I'll have to find some way of stopping it. I was around there, talking to Daniver, awhile ago."

"Did he mention anything about the murder?"

"Not a word."

"I hear he's pretty cute. Maybe he wants to collect before he says anything else. For if he doesn't, the fur's likely to stay a loss."

"He wants the fifteen thousand dollars; that's plain."

"Is Edleigh scared?"

"Just a little. But her nerves are good, and she'll come through all right. Just the same, though, the thing's stopped being just a thrilling adventure to her. And Dr. Pierce is a good bit upset by it. His thought is that he started the thing, and that it's all his fault."

"That's just like him, to take it all on his own shoulders," said Mickey. "He's sweet."

They were talking of the possibilities of this unexpected turn in the case when the door opened, and Farlen of the *Evening Globe* came in.

"Hello!" said Jerry. "Glad to see you."

He took the drama editor into the other office, and closed the door. Farlen looked peaked and strained; he sat down in a chair beside Jerry's desk.

"I thought I'd better come around," he said. "I felt I had to have some one to talk to."

"This," smiled Jerry, "is a great place for getting things off the chest. So if you've got anything that's annoying you, let's have it."

"You've heard how the homicide people had me around at City Hall hammering at me, I suppose?"

"Yes. And they do a very complete job at that, sometimes," said Jerry. "But I hope nothing but your feelings have been hurt."

"I'd hoped nothing would come out about me being with Jessie Haldren that afternoon," said Farlen. "Not so much on my account, you know; but me being with her gives a kind of weight to the charge against her. It gives it the features of a plot, or something of the kind."

"I see what you mean," said Jerry, "but I'm not sure about it. It might even turn out to be helpful."

BUT Farlen shook his head, a bleak look in his eyes. Now that they had him in this, he said, there was sure to be things uncovered that would do harm—about the two shows: Updyke and his money would be aired as being the cause of most of it. He wanted to see Jessie a star. So did she. And she wanted to prove to the show world she was better than Tancree. Updyke talked big money, and Jessie went up in the air.

Farlen said he wouldn't have been against the new show if Daniver hadn't been in it. He was woman-crazy. Farlen thought Updyke was a sap and was being handled. Updyke had never liked Sue: Jessie had probably told him things about her. Also about Daniver. There was that day at Greensleeves when they had the police in. The revolver Jessie had was Updyke's. He was there. The thing took place in the office, not the store as the newspapers had it. And the row was between Updyke and Daniver, and about money. Tancree got into it; when Updyke resented this, Daniver struck him; and Updyke pulled a gun. Jessie got it away from him. That's how she happened to be seen with the gun in her hand. She wouldn't let the facts be told by Updyke—perhaps not wanting a charge made against him. One against her, she knew, would be dropped.

The squabble, Farlen told Jerry, was about Daniver's attempt to use the money advanced by Updyke for the new show, to pay off a standing debt of the old one. This was money loaned Daniver by Charley Fraden, who'd got it from Max Faxter—and for which Faxter was holding a group of papers, having the signature of Daniver. All this had aroused Updyke, but not nearly so much as his learning that Daniver was planning to squeeze Jessie out of the new show and put Tancree in the leading rôle.

There was silence for a moment, and then Jerry asked:

"Was the money paid to Fraden?"

"No."

"Daniver still has it?"

"Tancree had it."

Farlen said Tancree had come to see him one morning. She'd heard about Daniver meaning to pay the money. If he did this, it might delay or prevent the production of the play. Had she been kept hanging around the fur shop for this? "I pointed out to her that Daniver had to settle or Max Faxter would take Greensleeves from him. But she said Greensleeves was one thing. Her career was another."

Somehow she got the money away from Daniver. It wasn't paid to Fraden. Faxter went into action with a lawyer, who found Greensleeves was nothing but a name. Even the stock in the place was owned by someone else. Faxter then said if Fraden didn't get him his money, he'd take over Fraden's gambling place.

That Updyke's money was in danger troubled Jessie Haldren. She was to blame, she thought. Farlen said he'd told her that if it became known where the money was, Tancree would be in danger, for neither Fraden nor Faxter were to be trifled with.

Frightened by this, Jessie tried to see Tancree, meaning to warn her. Also, she thought she could force the return of the money to Updyke.

"That, then," said Jerry, "was her object when she stopped Tancree on the Sedley Road?"

"Yes, it was. And she was driving my car. I'd gone with her that day to see a New York producer who has a farm out that way. We were returning home when she got the notion of trying once more to speak to Tancree. You've already heard how she saw the girl drive away with some other people. Well, she asked me to follow them—which I did, under protest. On the Sedley Road she told me she wanted me to stop the other car so she could talk to Tancree. I told her I wouldn't; for various reasons, I didn't want to appear in the matter, but she might do it alone if she insisted. So I stopped the car and got out. She took the wheel, and drove on. In a short time she returned. And we came back to town."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN



AFTER Farlen left, Jerry put on his hat and overcoat; he took a cab and was driven to the Corliss Apartments, where from

the foyer he called Updyke's apartment.

"Yes?" came the voice of Updyke.

"Mooney calling, from downstairs."

"Oh! All right; come up."

Jerry found Updyke pacing the floor and smoking.

"How's it all going?" inquired Mooney.

"Not any better. Have you been hearing anything?"

"I talk, and I listen," said Jerry. "And I keep searching in what I hear for any small thing that might be of some use. Awhile ago I talked to Farlen."

"What'd he tell you?"

Jerry caught the tone of this question, and looked at the young man inquiringly.

"You don't care much for him, do you?"

"Miss Haldren trusts him," said Updyke, "and that ought to go a good way with me. But at the same time I can't forget he's in the pay of Daniver."

"Has Haldren said to you at any time that he was with her that day on the road?"

There was a shadow on the young man's face. "No."

"When the police asked him about it, he said he was. And now he's told me how it happened."

Jerry told Updyke what Farlen had said about the run along Sedley Road. The young man listened but said nothing, and Jerry went on:

"Farlen was scared when the murder news broke. Not particularly for himself, because he knows he's only a kind of bystander in this thing. He was afraid of how it would look for Haldren, who has been doing most of the suffering so far. He said all the business he knows about would look like a cooked-up thing, with her in the middle, if it was put down in the D. A.'s office without any cleaning up; and that's why he spilled the lot of it to me."

"He's told you more than you've told me, then?"

"A good deal more. And as far as I can see it at the moment, it's about as complete a lot of trickery and double-crossing as I've ever been called in to look at." Jerry paused for a moment, and then added: "Farlen thinks a good deal of Haldren, and I think you do. To help her, he's come across with what he knows. What's the matter with you doing the same?"

"I've told you all I know," said Updyke.

"Did you tell me that, when you went out on the Sedley Road the day of the murder, Charley Fraden was with you?"

There was a pause, and then Updyke said:

"I didn't want to get him into this."

"Well, forget that; because he is in it. He was in your car that afternoon when one of your tires went wrong. He went to hunt up a telephone to call a garage, didn't he?" Updyke nodded. "And when the job was done, and the repair man had left, Fraden hadn't come back. You left your car and went on foot to Heron House—to look for him." Jerry waited for Updyke to speak, but as the young man said nothing, he asked: "What gave you the idea he might be there?"

Still there was no reply: Jerry Mooney sat at the edge of a table and scowled at Updyke.

"There'll be a time, and it'll not be long, when you'll have the police really take you in hand. And brother, you'll not come through it in an easy frame of mind. So why not avoid all that? If you tell what you know now, it might help clear up the case."

Updyke lighted another cigarette. He paced up and down, but he did not speak. Jerry went on:

"Sometime ago Fraden turned over a large sum of money to Daniver to be used in the production of the musical play 'Starshine.' Up to my talk with Farlen, I'd thought he was Daniver's partner in that enterprise. But Farlen tells me he was not. The money was a loan. Not only that, it was Max Faxter's money, and when it was lost, Max began to yell about it. He backs Fraden's gambling business, and Fraden is more or less in his hands. Daniver can't pay Fraden, and Fraden can't pay Faxter. So what's done? You are approached by Daniver. He's going to do a new show. Each of you are to chip in a hundred thousand dollars. Jessie Haldren is to have the leading rôle. Is that right?"

"Yes," said Updyke.

"You put up your share of the money. Then you find he's not put up his. Also you find he's taken most of yours. And he took it to pay off Fraden, so that Fraden could silence Max Faxter. Right?"

"Yes," said Updyke.

"But he didn't pay Fraden—the reason being Tancree. He'd promised her a lead in his next show. But she found out Haldren was to have it instead. And then she somehow manages to grab the money, bringing the whole works to a standstill. Fraden can't pay Faxter, and Faxter is going to shove him out of his place, and otherwise knock him around." Jerry paused here. "Fraden is a quiet kind of a party," he resumed. "But people who have seen him in action know he's really bad business. Tancree's got the money he thinks should be his," said Jerry. "That day when you and he were on Sedley Road he knew she was at Heron House. He'd told you she was. And when he didn't come back, after the telephone call, the thought came into your mind that he'd gone there—to see her." Jerry looked steadily at Updyke. "How about that for right?"

"Yes," said the young man. "I did think that."

"Here's something else," said Jerry. "Before you started out on the road with Fraden, he knew no one lived at Heron House. He knew the business of the fifteen-thousand-dollar fur coat was a job put up by somebody."

"He did know it," said Updyke. "He told me that, too. He was in Daniver's private office at the time the sale of the coat was made in the store. He was talking with Sue Tancree, trying to get her to pass my money on to him. But she wouldn't do it. Daniver came in and said he had to send some one with the person who'd bought the fur, and asked Sue to go. She did, probably more to get away from Fraden than anything else. And then Daniver, when she'd gone to get ready for the trip, told Fraden he knew the thing was a plot to steal the fur. He had an idea Heron House was tenantless—that the thieves would slip away with the fur and leave the girl there, probably alone and not knowing they'd gone. If Fraden wanted to follow her, there was his chance."

"Yeah," said Jerry. "but how did you come to be in the thing?"

"I was in the store," said Updyke, "waiting to see Daniver. I'd just come in. I saw Fraden hurry out; and as I wanted to speak to him, I followed. There wasn't a cab in sight, and when he saw me, he asked if my car was around anywhere. He got into it, and set the motor going. I hopped in also to know what was going on. As we ran on out of the city, he told me what I've just told you. His idea was that Tancree carried the money around with her, and that he'd have a chance to get it away from her."

"All the time," said Jerry, "it was your money he was talking about."

"Yes," said Updyke, "and I mentioned that to him. He merely gave me a look. I got a good deal out of that look," Updyke told Jerry. "For the first time, I really understood how these people regarded me. I was nothing at all."

"So," said Jerry, "when he didn't come back from the telephone-call business, you made up your mind he'd gone along to see Tancree."

"Yes. I did go up the road toward the place; but then I thought I'd better not get any further into the thing than I was. So I went back to the car. I waited a half-hour or so; but as he didn't return, I drove back to town."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN



JERRY, after leaving the apartment where he'd spoken with Updyke, took a subway train, walked a few blocks after he'd left

it and came presently to a sign over a basement entrance bearing the name of *Cicico*.

Cicico was there, seated at a littered desk, smoking a strong cigar.

"Hi'yah," said Jerry. "If you have the time, I'd like to talk a little."

"If it's soap," said Cicico, "I've got a ton of it."

"No soap," grinned Jerry. "It's a few little matters I'm trying to put together, and I thought you might be able to tell me something."

"I don't know much," said the man. "I don't get around many places except the ones I work in."

"Well, that'll be O.K.," said Jerry. "How's for a little conversation about Greensleeves?"

Cicico's face clouded; he got up from the desk.

"All I know about Greensleeves," he said, "is that I work for them, and they pay me. Anyhow,"—staring at Jerry in a hostile way—"what's-a-matter with you coming around here asking things? Are you a cop?"

"Rest easy," said Jerry. "If I was, I wouldn't be talking to you like I am. Not with me knowing the load you're carrying about that Sedley Road business."

"You're a liar!" Cicico told him. "I don't know anything that aint my business. I don't even know where Sedley Road is."

"That could be," stated Jerry, "and you could still have some mighty interesting stuff to unload." He put his hands in his overcoat pockets and studied Cicico. "What was the trouble between Daniver and Fraden that night?"

"I don't know anything about any trouble," said the man. "I don't know Fraden only by sight; and I didn't see him that night."

"Listen," said Jerry: "I can see you want to keep out of anything, and that's all right with me. I never blame anybody for doing the best they can for themselves. But get this in your mind: trying to get out of a thing often gets you in deeper. You might only be a fellah who's noticed something—no more than that. But as soon as you

begin to run, you're suspected. So, don't do it. Have sense, and answer a few simple questions."

"I tell you I aint got nothing to tell," insisted Cicico. "What do you want me to do, think up some kind of a gag just to please you? If you aint a cop, go on to the cops and tell them what I'm saying. Nobody aint got anything on me. I work at my job, and I let other people's business alone."

Just then a car pulled up at the curb outside, and Cicico said:

"That's all the space I've got to give you. Me, I'm a working guy, and I got no time for busybodies." He waved Jerry out of the place, and locked the door behind them. Putting the key in his pocket, he said to the man who had driven the car: "You go over to Fogalman's and see that window job through. Mind you, it's all of them! If there's any more funny business, some of these guys'll be fired."

The man departed, and Cicico got behind the wheel.

"Pretty old model," said Jerry, his eyes on the car.

"It's good enough for me," said Cicico. "I get everything out of it I want."

He threw in the clutch, and the old machine went off downstreet, with Jerry standing looking after it. . . .

It was after hours when Jerry reached his office, and he found a message on his desk, telephoned in by Chubby.

He said he had gone to the headquarters of the window-cleaners' local and asked about the women who worked for Cicico. And after some talk with the girl in charge of the place, he found that Cicico was having trouble with one of his crews. And it was the one whose nightly routine took in Greensleeves. One of the women had been frightened at Greensleeves, somehow; she did a good deal of talking with the other women, and they also became restless. The result was that the one who had started the thing had been discharged, the matter then calming down. The name of this woman was Katie Gortlef, and he also gave her address.

"On the third floor," Chubby had said. "And being sore at Cicico, she might tell you something. If you want me any time in the next two hours, call Sid's: I'll be there, eating a steak and some other things."

Jerry looked at his watch. There was a chance that the night-working Katie Gortlef, being unemployed, would be at home at that hour. So he made his way to the address Chubby had given him—a shabby-looking building, the lower floor of which was given over to the use of a dealer in odds and ends of piece goods. There was a door at one side, a steep narrow stairway and a bell with the name *Gortlef* under it. He rang the bell and climbed the stairs. At the third floor a door opened, and a woman appeared.

"Katie Gortlef?" said Jerry, carefully. "Is she here?"

"I'm Katie Gortlef," the woman told him. "What you want?"

"The people at the union gave me your address," Jerry said. "I'd like a little talk with you."

"The union, what good is it?" demanded Katie. "They let that bum Cicico fire me. Besides, they said I was a liar."

"Listen," soothed Jerry, "don't let them get you sore. I've come over to hear your side of it. What say if we sit down? Then I'll give what you say a good listening-to."

Katie asked him to come in. There was an older woman in the shabby little room. Both were square-faced and looked like people who had striven with mean, hard work all their lives. Katie said the older woman was her sister; she had a job in a factory where she worked during the day.

"What I want to ask," said Jerry to Katie, after they'd talked about jobs, and the union, and hours, and such things, "is what started this trouble you had with Cicico. I talked with him, and I didn't get much satisfaction. I thought you could tell me something he was maybe holding out on me."

"That wop wouldn't tell you the truth! He lied about me in the union, and maybe they're mad at me because he says things about me, and I'll not get another job."

"What didn't he like?" asked Jerry. "Was it about the argument Daniver had with the other man that night?"

"No. It was the woman he got mad about. The girl."

Jerry sat looking at her for a moment. Then he said: "All right. Go ahead, and tell about her."

"The way that Cicico talks, everybody thinks I'm dumb," complained Katie Gortlef. "And I aint; I know who I see as good as anybody. I know a good bit more than that wop who calls me names and curses me."

"I'll bet you do," agreed Jerry. "He didn't sound so good to me when I talked with him."

"He don't never sound good to nobody," proclaimed Katie. "When he said things about me, I was in the union. If it was some other place, I'd punched him."

"He must have been awful sore," said Jerry. "What'd you say about this girl?"

"Every night, except Sunday and the holiday, I go to work three hours at Greensleeves. Sometimes I see a girl there. I don't like to speak bad about anybody," Katie said, "but I talk with the women who work with me, and we all say she's the boss' lady friend."

"When you say boss, do you mean Cicico?"

"No. We all say she's Mr. Daniver's friend." Katie gestured. "Else, why should she be in his place at night, so late?"

"Check!" said Jerry.

"If I see her lots of times, don't I know her when I see her again? I say that to Cicico, and he said to me I was a dumbhead. Maybe he talked so because he was mad about somebody taking his car, but what do I care about—"

"Now, wait," said Jerry, "let's get this straight: Do I understand this was on the night the people had the loud argument in Daniver's office?"

"Yes."

"And on that night somebody stole Cicico's car?"

"Yes. He always took us, and all our things, to Greensleeves in it; and he'd always leave the car standing at the back door of the place until we were done with our work. This night, after we'd been there maybe an hour, he went out to get something from it, and the car was gone. He was mad as hell. Somebody should get pinched by the police, he said."

"All right; let that go for now. Tell me about the girl."

"I was talking to Cicico after the fighting was in the office, when the man that was there went away. I said I'd seen the girl, and was they fighting about her? And then he began to curse, and call me things."

"I think I know the girl you mean," said Jerry. "She's tall and has thick, dark hair."

But Katie Gortlef shook her head.

"Oh, no," she said. "She was tall, but her hair was not black. It was like gold. She worked for Greensleeves. I've seen her pictures. She dances in the theater."

THERE was a silence. Jerry Mooney leaned back in his chair, clasped his hands together and twiddled his thumbs. "It wasn't for saying this that Cicico went to the union about you, and afterward fired you?"

"No. He was mad that time, but it was when I talked with the other woman a couple nights after, that he done them other things. He asked me if I didn't see her that night. He said it was imagination. Imagination, my eye!" said Katie indignantly. "When I look straight at anybody, and somebody says I don't see them, they're crazy!"

"This talk you had with him was a couple of nights after you heard the loud talk in the office?"

"Yes. And he said to me how could I see at Greensleeves that other night, when she was dead in a place miles away where some crooks had killed her?"

Jerry looked at her steadily.

"What did you say to that?"

"I told him what I told the other woman I worked with: I said if she was dead at that time, out there on that road like we read about in the papers, then what I saw at Greensleeves that night was her ghost."

At the first public telephone Jerry called Sid's place: in a moment he had Chubby.

"All the tenderloins were gone," said Chubby, "so I'm having chops. And it's just as well; they don't thicken you up so much around the middle."

"Listen good," said Jerry: "this is important. If it costs a little money, don't mind. I'll make it right. Get Eddie Mott with his box. All the night stuff. And go with him. This is where you go, and when. Also what you do. Anything that's hard to remember, write down." He gave Chubby lengthy and careful instructions; and at the end said: "Is all that clear?"

"Every word," said Chubby. "I could do it all right now, and never think twice."

"By the time Eddie's done, and you've got the stuff, meet me at my building. If I'm not in, wait. If I'm delayed, I'll call the night porter, and he'll pass the word to you. All right?"

"O. K.," said Chubby.

Jerry considered for a few moments after he'd put the telephone down. Then he lifted it once more and called Updyke's hotel.

"I want to speak to Frank Updyke," he said.

There was evident hesitation on the part of the telephone girl. Then she said:

"I'll transfer you to the manager, please."

In a little while a man's voice said inquiringly: "Yes?"

"Frank Updyke, please," said Jerry.

"I'm sorry, sir. Mr. Updyke is not in the hotel at the moment."

"I see," said Jerry. "Thank you." There was something unusual in this. Jerry put down the telephone, and then taking it up again, called the same number. When the reply came, he said: "Give me the head porter, please." When a man's voice came a moment later, Jerry said: "Hello, Henry. This is Jerry Mooney."

"How are you, Jerry?"

"Henry, what news do you have on Frank Updyke, who's been stopping there?"

"Well, Jerry, we're not saying much about it. But about a half-hour ago Engle and another Headquarters man came in and took him away with them."

"O. K. Many thanks."

After this call, Jerry proceeded to Fraden's office. When he entered the office, he found the gambler at his desk as usual. He looked at Jerry placidly, and said:

"You're getting to be a regular visitor, aint you?"

Jerry grinned. "My interest is what's known as growing," he said. "The more I see of you, the more your conversation gets hold of me."

"Well," said Fraden, "you've had all of it that I care to give you. So, what say if you step out? And keep out!"

"Now, listen," said Jerry, amiably. "What's the use of cracking up an old friendship? You and me have been—"

Fraden got up; his placid look had gone; his rather broad face was wrinkled like that of an angry dog.

"I've let you go by for a long time, Mooney," he said. "not thinking it worth while making a noise about you. But lately you've begun moving in too close to my private affairs."

"Have I ever made a crack about your game?" asked Jerry, his brows lifted. "When some of the neighbors have been given the works, have I ever put the accusing eye on you?"

"Don't talk sweet to me," said Fraden. "I don't like it from anybody, but from an egg like you it's got sounds

and edges I can't stand. I don't want to put a hand on you," he said, measuring Jerry with his eye, "and I don't want to call special attention to the place. But if you aint out of here in another thirty seconds, I'm going to throw you out."

Jerry grinned again.

"Listen, fellah," he said, "for a guy like you that's spent the last five years trying how round he could get his belly and still be able to button his pants around it, you've got a—"

Fraden rushed at him, his heavy arms swinging; but Jerry moved aside and let him stumble into the wall; then he pinned him by the back of the neck and held him there.

"You big prune, who ever told you to do something like this? You're not made for it. And if it wasn't for me wanting some talk with you, I'd slap this four-cornered head of yours up into a point." He let go of Fraden, and when the man turned, pushed him into a chair. At once Fraden got up. Jerry made no move to strike, but stood off and glowered at him. "Stop fooling," he said, "and let's be serious."

Fraden moved toward him, trying to avoid the outheld open hand which was ready to push him away.

"Ten minutes ago," said Jerry, "I heard the police went into Updyke's hotel and lugged him away to the calabozo." Fraden now stood quite still, his eyes fixed and expectant. "That's one of the things I came in to tell you."

"What's happened?" said Fraden.

"Maybe it's for questioning again. But then, maybe it's more than that."

"They got nothing on him."

"Anyway, they think they have. And they'll go on thinking so as long as he keeps his mouth shut." Jerry waited for the man to speak, but there was only silence. So he went on: "They know someone was with him out on the Sedley Road that afternoon; but they don't know who it was. And he aint told them. As long as he don't, they'll be on his neck."

Again there was a silence; then Fraden said: "Well?"

"I was wondering how long it would be before you stepped out and said it was you."

"So he did talk to someone, eh?" said Fraden with a sneer.

"After I showed him I already knew, he talked to me."

"Suppose it was me who was with him—what then?"

"We'll not suppose it. Because I *know*. And after you put in the call to the garage that day, you went to Heron House."

"Where do you get that? I never heard tell of Heron House until I read the papers the next day."

"What do you say if we don't talk foolish," proposed Jerry. "It'll save breath and time. Early that afternoon you were at Greensleeves. You were in the office when the fur coat was sold to the girl who said she was from that Sedley Road place. You'd been talking with Daniver and Tancree about the money—Updyke's money—which was to have been handed over to you, but which Tancree had grabbed. Right?"

"Updyke talked plenty, I see," said Fraden. "But it looks like he told you more than ever happened."

"Daniver knew the fur coat buy was a phony; but he sent Tancree with the buyer out to Heron House. He told you that more than likely she had the money with her. You got into Updyke's car, and steered. After her."

Fraden said nothing, and Jerry went on:

"I've got it on you sure, up to the place where you went to hunt for a telephone. And it'll only be hours before I can show that the fur-coat operators had left Heron House when you got there. And that you went in and found Tancree still waiting for them."

"And then, I suppose, I killed her?" sneered Fraden.

"Oh, no. I know you didn't. What I think you did was to try and get her to give up the money. Maybe she

merely refused. Maybe she denied she had it. Anyway, you both left the place and came back to the city; and then, together, you went to Greensleeves. I'm not sure what time you got there," said Jerry, "but it was long after dark. You must have told Daniver you'd be back, for he was there when you came to the rear door."

There was surprise in Fraden's eyes.

"You go hunting around, don't you?" he said.

"One of the things I see," said Jerry, "is that when you showed up, he was surprised. He didn't think you'd have anybody with you."

"You think that rat had some kind of an idea about me?" said Fraden. "But I aint a woman-killer."

"It's in my mind he thought you were," Jerry told him.

"You were sore. Max Faxter was pointing the finger at you. You'd expected to get this money to pay him off. But the girl stepped in ahead of you. When Daniver told you she kept the money on her, he told you where she went. And when he saw you follow her, don't you, too, think he had certain ideas and expectations?"

"Maybe so, but he wasn't fooling me any," said Fraden. "I don't do anybody's dirty work."

"You had quite an argument with him, didn't you?" said Jerry. "I mean that night after you and the girl got back and were with him in his office?"

"Daniver's a good talker," said Fraden. "And there are times when I don't listen very well."

"When you left Greensleeves after the argument, you were sore," said Jerry. "And, judging from that, you hadn't got anywhere about the money."

"No," said Fraden. "When I left there, I hadn't been paid. But I put the talk on Daniver and told him what was going to happen. Max Faxter was really losing this dough, not me. And when you take anything from Max Faxter, I says to him, you are taking a long chance."

Just then the telephone rang, and Fraden went to the desk and took it up.

"Yes," he said, "this is Fraden speaking." There was a pause, a strident voice was sounding; Jerry Mooney's ears stood up; he grinned with interest. "Oh, hello, Pash!" said Fraden. "What's on your mind?" Again the voice, and then Fraden replied. "But I can't do that tonight. I've got a lot of business to—" But the strident voice rattled and raved through the transmitter. "No, don't send anyone after me," said Fraden. "I'll be over there in about an hour."

He put down the telephone and looked at Jerry.

"Pash," said Fraden.

"I recognized the accents," smiled Jerry. "No one else bears down exactly in that way." He nodded to Fraden. "What to do now," he said, "is use common sense. Once you face Pash, and are really in something, you've not got much chance. You'd best open up the package and show him the goods, right at the beginning. He's got Updyke, and he's got Haldren; and if they've both talked, you'd better do the same."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN



JERRY MOONEY was seated at his desk, his feet up, smoking a cigarette. His watch lay where he

could see it without making

an extra motion, and it pointed to something past the

midnight hour. Then the telephone rang. He took it up.

"Mooney," he said.

"Mr. Mooney," came a voice, "there's a young man down here on the first floor who says he has an appointment with you."

"All right," said Jerry. "Bring him up." A little later the elevator was heard to stop, and then Chubby, accom-

panied by the head night porter appeared at the door. "Everything's all right," Jerry assured the man. "Some work that had to be done tonight." When the man had gone, Jerry said: "Let's see."

"I think they're good," said Chubby. "Mott took a half dozen shots. A couple of them are as plain as day."

He took some photo prints from a heavy envelope, and Jerry examined them under the light of his desk lamp.

"A good job," he said. "Nice. And clear."

He thrust the prints back into the envelope and put on his overcoat and hat. In a few minutes they were in the street; Jerry had parted with Chubby, and was on his way to City Hall. When he'd reached the police level in the building, he stopped at the desk of the sergeant on duty.

"How's a chance to speak with my old sparring partner, Pash?"

"He's around," said the sergeant, "but he's doing heavy duty tonight. They're going to break that Sedley Road case, I think. But here's Engle; maybe he'll be able to tell."

ENGLE smiled heavily when he saw Jerry. "Yeah," he said, "I think the Captain'll see you. It might be some fun."

He went into Pash's office, and in a moment came out, Pash following him. The homicide chief had a malevolent gleam operating through his lenses; and there was malice in the curl of his lip. He said:

"It's late, but I thought you might chance in, as you often do."

"Only," said Jerry, affably, "this time it wasn't chance."

"I wonder," said Pash, "if there's been any information trickled out of here and down into the Etruria Tower?"

"Not a word," said Jerry. "Why, have I missed anything?"

"I think you have—a little," the malevolence in the lenses increasing. "I've got a few people inside there who have been doing some interesting talking."

"Oh, yes," said Jerry, brightly. "Updyke and Fraden. I was around at Fraden's place when you called and asked him to come in." He leaned against the sergeant's desk, and smiled cheerfully. "And I knew right away you'd got Updyke to tell you who was with him in the car that day." He put his hands in his pockets and beamed at the Captain. "I wonder if the boys have been saying anything I haven't heard?"

"Have you been talking to Fraden?" Pash asked.

"Oh, yes; I've had a couple little conversations with him lately. An interesting guy, if you can get him started."

"What'd he tell you?"

"Well, suppose we don't go into that right now. What I came here for was to have a look at some of the photographs taken at the Heron House that afternoon."

"What do you want to see them for?"

"Listen," said Jerry, "just a few minutes ago I heard a remark about you being ready to break this case. O. K.; that'll suit me fine—if you do it. But there's one thing I want to tell you: neither Updyke, Haldren, nor Fraden'll tell you anything that'll do that. They don't know enough."

"Maybe you do," sneered Pash.

"Put your money on it that I do. And pay attention: when it comes down to playing real marbles, I don't fool. You've seen me more than once, and you ought to know. I told you I was on this thing, and you've fought me every step of the way. Well, now I'm almost at the end of it; and I'd like to see you lay off the hard words and give me a little help."

There was a silence for a few moments. The desk sergeant looked at Engle, and winked.

"What do you want me to do?" asked Pash.

"Suppose we have a look at these photographs I just mentioned. Both of us. I'll let you see every move I make. My case is worked out, and I've got nothing to

hold back. From this minute on, if you'll play ball, I think it's going to be all nice and easy."

"All right," said Pash.

Engle watched the two as they passed through a doorway. And he said to the sergeant:

"I wouldn't be surprised if he had the old man licked again."

"Smart guy," said the sergeant. "Puts his shoulders behind all his jobs, too."

Pash called for the Heron House pictures; and they were put on a table before them. Jerry spread them out, and his quick eyes almost at once picked out those of the tire tracks. Here were those made by the caretaker's car, faintly pressed on the very surface of the hard gravel. And there were the deeper prints made in the soft ground at the edge of the drive: the patched tires Sog Finny had spoken of. Jerry put that print flat on the table; then he took from the envelope the one given him by Chubby a little while before, and placed it alongside.

"Give a look," he said to Pash. "That long strip with the broken edges. That bit of rivet head picked up somewhere, and imbedded. Are the photos alike?"

"They're the same," said Pash.

"I thought they would be." Jerry tapped the picture he'd brought in with one finger. "Mark this one, and file it away." He glanced around: there were several people working among the files and plainly attentive to what was proceeding. He picked up a blank card from the table, wrote a line or two upon it, and gave it to Pash. "I'm going there," he said. In less than a half hour, what I have to do I'll have done. If you don't mind, I'd like a squad car at this place and at that time. At the rear door. I'll have some work for you."

IN the street behind Greensleeves there were few lights; at that hour of night the place was dim and silent. At the rear door of the furrier's, Jerry saw Cicico's car. He knocked at the door; there was no motion behind it, and he knocked again. Then there was the sound of drawing bolts, and he saw Pell, the man he'd talked with during his previous visit at Greensleeves.

"Oh, hello," said Jerry, and was about to step inside. But the bulk of the man was solidly in his way.

"This is just a little visit," said Jerry, cheerfully. "After hours, maybe, but what say if we forget about that?"

He moved into the doorway. Pell put his palm against his chest to shove him out, but Jerry knocked the hand aside, threw his weight suddenly forward and pushed the man back a foot or two. Now inside, Jerry grinned.

"No hard feelings," he said. "Nobody gets sore when a man's on a little business."

"You're a tough boy, eh?" said Pell. He stepped back a little and looked at Jerry, a cold anger in his eyes. "Have you ever looked into a gun?"

"Yeah," replied Jerry. "And I don't mind saying I didn't like it. But, listen, we aint going to have anything like that now. This is to be a serious talk about serious things." As he looked around he saw Cicico. "Just the party I wanted to see," he said to him.

"Well," said Cicico, "I'm not wanting to see you. And I think I told you something like that already tonight."

"Yeah," said Jerry, "but I seldom bother with things people say when they're out of temper." He turned to Pell. "I was up to Cicico's place and got talking to him about the goings-on here the other night. And he didn't make any distance with me at all. So I thought I'd run around while he was here and go over some of the points of the matter again."

"All right, fellah," said Pell, determinedly. "But you'll do that somewhere else." He pointed to the door. "Out!"

"Now, wait," said Jerry. "What you're doing is pushing me right into something I don't want to do. Don't you see that? The police are always hard for me to talk

to. I'd rather talk over matters with you two, right here where it's nice and quiet and where no one'll disturb us."

Pell looked at Cicico. The office-cleaner seemed nervous; his jaw was clenched, his hands opened and shut. But neither of them spoke.

"We can finish the whole thing in a minute or two," Jerry told them, agreeably. "What I'm specially interested in is the girl Charley Fraden had with him the other night when he came here." There was continued silence. "Whoever it was," Jerry went on, "there was a good bit of talk in Daniver's office about her. Loud talk."

"Fraden never comes here at night," said Pell. "No one does, except the work people."

Jerry looked puzzled.

"Well, if that's so," said he, "it kind of puts my information out of whack. I've had it, and it seemed pretty straight, that Fraden was here. And that a girl came with him. A blonde girl. That she was in Daniver's office with Daniver and Fraden. And she was there during the loud talk I just mentioned."

"No girl was here any night this week. Or last week," said Pell. "And Fraden has never been here at night. I'd know, because I'm always here until the cleaners leave."

"It's funny how people tell you things like that, aint it?" said Jerry. "It gives a person such a lot of trouble. Maybe," he said, and he looked at Cicico, "Your car was never stolen, either—on the same night the girl was here? The report I heard was you were sore about it and did a lot of beefing to other people who were around."

"Whoever told you that are liars!" said Cicico. "My car was never stolen, on that night or any other night. And I never said it was."

Jerry seemed more puzzled than ever.

"It's funny, aint it," said he, "how these things get started? When a man's got a car somebody steals, of course he knows about it. And if he gets it back it shows he's been to the police or something like that. And you aint been to the police, have you?"

"You've got a lot of talk, fellah," said Cicico.

"I'm just trying to explain how a thing like that might be," said Jerry. "And there's another way it could have happened—that is if you missed the car from the place you'd put it. The party that took it might have brought it back. Maybe he didn't mean to steal it at all. He might just have meant to use it for something."

"Who did you say you were when you were in here before?" asked Pell, a hard, bitter look in his eyes.

"Mooney's the name," said Jerry. "Remember? I was in to see Daniver. And mentioning Daniver, suppose we take him for instance. What if he needed a car that night? Late? And there was none handy but yours"—to Cicico—"standing outside there. And suppose he just slipped out when no one was looking, and used it? He might have had a little errand somewhere: do you see what I mean? Or," and Jerry cocked an eye first at Cicico, and then at Pell, "suppose there was something he had to take somewhere? Something too heavy for him to carry? Also, maybe the place he had to take it to was a good piece away? Are you following my idea? In that case, when he got back, all he'd have to do would be to pull up right at the place he'd got the car, and leave it. And then he—"

BEFORE he finished, Pell lunged at him. But Jerry backed away. "Listen," he said, "what's the use of making this worse than it is? I don't know how deep you boys are in this thing. Maybe it's not so deep as to keep a court and a jury from listening to you. So keep your heads up; don't do anything foolish. The police'll be here any minute—" He hadn't finished this sentence, when the telephone rang and Jerry moved toward it. "That's probably them, now," he said.

But Pell stood in his way. "Keep away from that!"

Cicico took up the telephone

"Hello," he said. "No; this is Cicico. Yes, Pell's here." He held the instrument to Pell. "It's Daniver," he said.

Pell took the telephone, keeping his look on Jerry.

"This is Pell," he said. And then, his voice suddenly lifting. "The police! What'd they call you for?" There was a pause, Pell listening. "No, there hasn't been. But we have got a visitor here. Yeah, it's the party that came the other day and talked to you. Named Mooney. No. He hasn't said anything—not yet. But he's been asking questions and making insinuations." The man was silent, listening, for a space. Then he seemed startled; his face became white; he shouted into the telephone: "Don't be foolish: do you hear? This'll turn out all right."

THEN, as the telephone seemed to go dead, he put it down. While he'd been talking, there had been a knocking on the door; Jerry had opened it. Pash and four uniformed men entered.

"Well," said Pash, looking around, "what's the word?"

"The first one," said Jerry, "is that I think you made a wrong move when you called Daniver."

"How'd you know I called him?"

"He just now mentioned it over the telephone. But, anyway, here're two customers for you. Accomplices, one way or another, in the murder of Sue Tancree."

"Now, look!" said Cicico. "I aint in this at all. I was only working here. I can prove it. And I didn't even know my car had been taken until I went outside and seen it was missing."

"What's the business?" said Pash to Jerry.

But Jerry disregarded the question, and spoke to Pell:

"Where was Daniver?" he asked.

"Don't you wish you knew?" Pell sneered.

"Daniver lives at the Holdsford," said Pash. "And he was there only a bit ago."

"All right," Jerry said. "We're going around there right away—you and me."

"Take these two men to Headquarters," Pash directed the policemen. "Bogan, you stay and keep an eye on the place. I'll send another man in a half hour."

Jerry and the Captain were in the red police car and traveling toward the Holdsford when Pash said:

"What I must have is information. What have you got on Daniver?"

"He's the party that killed the girl," said Jerry.

Pash stared at him. "How sure are you of that?"

"Wait a little," Jerry said. "When we've tied him up you'll know it all."

A few minutes later the quiet of the Holdsford was broken by the arrival of the uniformed Pash and the quick-striding Mooney.

"Mr. Daniver?" said the night manager when summoned. "In just a moment."

"Mooney to see him," said Jerry; "on a little matter of business."

The manager made the call. But there was no reply. And he said to the clerk:

"Is Mr. Daniver at home?"

"He must be. There was a telephone call from his apartment less than a quarter of an hour ago."

The manager instructed the operator to keep on ringing. This was done; then Pash said impatiently:

"That's enough; no use fooling with the matter. We'll go up."

"And," said Jerry to the manager, "you'd better come along. And bring a pass-key."

The elevator stopped at the twelfth floor, and they knocked at the door of Daniver's apartment. There was no reply, and the knocking was continued.

"We'll have all the people on this floor up and complaining," said the manager, very much upset. "Mr. Daniver must have gone out, after all."

"We'll see," said Pash. "Open the door."

Reluctantly, the manager did so, and they went in. There was a little foyer, brightly lighted; a door leading into a sitting-room stood open. And there, in a big chair, his sleek head and his arms hanging, a pistol of small caliber lying on the floor beside him, was Julius Daniver.

The startled manager seized the telephone and began calling into it; but Jerry Mooney and Pash knew death when they saw it; they did not give the huddled figure a second look, but turned their attention to the apartment and began, coldly and methodically, going through the first formula of search.

NEXT day, Jerry was talking with Zoe Edleigh and Dr. Pierce. "The first thing I looked for," he said, "was a statement. People who knock themselves off usually leave one. I found a sheet of writing on the telephone stand, and I got hold of it and read it before Pash saw it. There was nothing about you"—to Zoe—"or the fur coat, so I called his attention to it.

"It stated, over Daniver's signature, that Tancree had taken possession of a large sum of money which was owed to another party. She refused to give it up, and in that way put Daniver's life in danger. She persisted in her refusal, and in a fit of fury he had killed her.

"As there was only a dozen or so lines of this," said Jerry, "of course he couldn't tell the whole story. But here's the way I had it pieced together; and it's the way I think it'll go down in the records. As I've already told you, Daniver had borrowed the money from Fraden to produce the music show 'Starshine.' Fraden, in turn, had borrowed it from his banker, Max Faxter, who, when it was not repaid, began to make threats.

"Daniver, being a very cool kind of a card, tried to work out of his difficulties in this way. He had held Tancree in reserve for a new show. But he'd got Updyke interested by promising he'd star Haldren. He took Updyke's money out of the bank, meaning to turn it over to Fraden. But Tancree, who must have been an enterprising young person, got hold of the money. Very likely saying the show was going to go on, and she was going to be the star, or else. Daniver tried to explain the pressure he was under. But she wouldn't listen.

"Fraden was in Daniver's office one afternoon, trying to collect, and he was full of anger. Daniver had left him for a space to personally see to a customer who seemed to have lots of money to spend. Tancree was in the office, and had been stubbornly resisting every effort of the two men to get the money away from her.

"When Daniver, knowing the fur buy was a phony, came back, he asked Tancree to go with the customer who had bought the coat, and to collect the price in cash. Tancree went. Daniver then told Fraden the girl had the Updyke money on her person. He said it would be a good idea to keep after her. To get it from her."

"And it is your idea he thought Fraden would kill her?" said Zoe in a voice of horror.

"I only suggested that," said Jerry. "But my opinion is that it was right about there he began to not care what happened to her. Anyway, Fraden went after her, as I've told you already, in Updyke's car. He found Tancree in an untenanted house and tried once more to get the money from her. But, like as not, she was as tough as she'd been before. And so he took her back to Greensleeves. There were more arguments, more threats, and then Fraden left. After that, Daniver killed the girl."

"In his office!" said Zoe, her eyes full of fright.

"Yes. And then he began to think of what he'd do with the body. He remembered the fur job, and Heron House. If he could get the body out there and into the house it would be believed the fur operators had done the murder. Cicico's car was at the back door. Daniver must have got every one else away into some other part of the

establishment and then carried the body out to the car, and drove away with it.

"My view of it," said Jerry, "is that it was Daniver who forced the catch of the back window and scuffed out the footprints. Then he passed through the house, opened the front door, carried in the body and placed it on the floor. He closed the door, which had a spring latch, after him, got into Cicico's car and drove back to town."

"All that," said Joe Pierce, "would require a man with a cold, steady nerve."

"And I think Daniver had quite a lot of that," said Jerry. "And he was careful in everything he did—but one. And that was the tracks made by the patched tires of Cicico's car. He ran a little off the drive in the dark. Sog Finny, from the Acme Garage, was the first to notice these tracks. He said they must have been made by the big car he'd seen turning into the Heron House grounds the afternoon before. But I knew that car had good tires, and I also knew that an unaccounted-for car had been there; and one that I'd have to be on the lookout for.

"When I saw Cicico's car at his place in Wood Street," proceeded Jerry, "I knew I had it. But I sent two people out to get flash photographs of the tires. When I compared them with the pictures the police made of the tracks, that clinched the matter."

"When did you begin to think of Daniver as the possible killer?" asked Dr. Pierce.

"At the beginning," said Jerry. "I kept my mind on Updyke. Then I began to have some thoughts about Farlen. Afterward, Fraden got a big play in my thinking. But I never really thought about Daniver until they telephoned you"—to Zoe—"from Greensleeves. When I talked with him that day, I began to see he had no belief that the people who took the fur had done the murder. And by the time I'd finished with him I was sure he not only knew that, but that he knew who did it. Fraden then seemed to be the party. But later, when I found the girl had been at Greensleeves' that night after Fraden had gone, I knew it couldn't be any one but Daniver."

The telephone rang: it was Mickey asking for Jerry. "Captain Pash has just called," Mickey told him. "He wants you to get in touch, right away!"

"This is going to be some kind of a beef," said Jerry as he dialed police headquarters. "I always expect it after I've made Pash a present. I think it must be his way of squaring himself with himself."

PASH came through stridently.

"Listen, Mooney! What's this I'm hearing?"

"I'd never guess," said Jerry in his most amiable tones. "You'll have to tell me."

"There's a rumor said to be going around that you were employed by the fur thieves in this case; and that your job was to find the killer of Sue Tancree so it'd not be put on them."

"That's a cute thought," said Jerry. "Where did you hear it?"

"Well," acknowledged Pash, his tone somewhat moderated, "I didn't hear it—a communication was mailed in to the department."

"By whom?"

"There was no signature, but—"

"Now, wait!" said Jerry. "The idea is that you start calling me up to do some rough riding about an empty gag—that was maybe sent in to get a laugh."

"Now, listen," said Pash, aggravated, "it sounds like your kind of thing. And when I'm dealing with you, I have to be on the lookout. The idea you always hand out is that you think so much of the law that you often step in and work for nothing, just to see justice done. But I know you, Mooney; there's never anything you do that don't mean something outside the thing you say."

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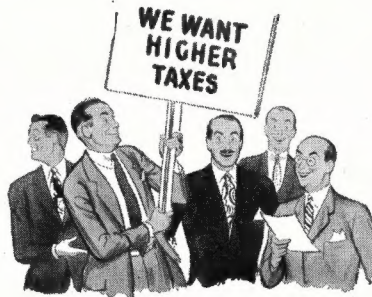
1. BUY ONLY WHAT YOU NEED

Don't buy a *thing* unless you *cannot* get along without it. Spending can't create more goods. It makes them scarce and prices go up. So make everything you own last longer. "Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without."



2. PAY NO MORE THAN CEILING PRICES

If you do pay more, you're party to a black market that boosts prices. And if prices go up through the ceiling, your money will be worth less. Buy rationed goods only with stamps.



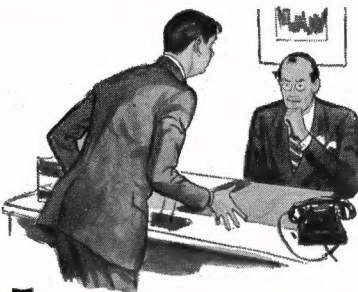
3. SUPPORT HIGHER TAXES

It's easier and cheaper to pay for the war as you go. And it's better to pay big taxes *now*—while you have the extra money to do it. Every dollar put into taxes means a dollar less to bid for scarce goods and boost prices.



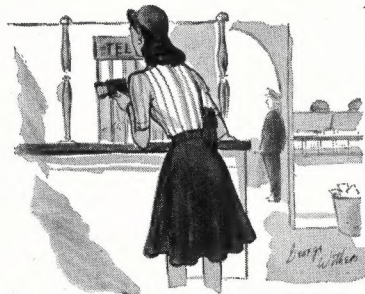
4. PAY OFF OLD DEBTS

Paid-off debts make you independent now . . . and make your position a whale of a lot safer against the day you may be earning less. So pay off every cent you owe—and avoid making new debts as you'd avoid healing Hitler!



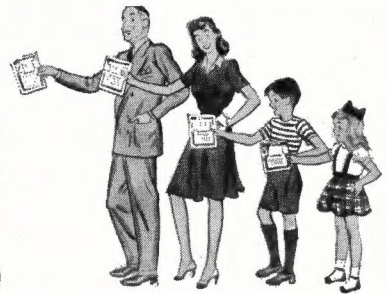
5. DON'T ASK MORE MONEY

in wages, or in prices for goods you have to sell. That puts prices up for the things all of us buy. We're all in this war together—business men, farmers and workers. Increases come out of everybody's pocket—including *yours*.



6. SAVE FOR THE FUTURE

Money in the savings bank will come in handy for emergencies. And money in life insurance protects your family, protects you in old age. See that you're ready to meet any situation.



7. BUY WAR BONDS

and hold them. Buy as many as you can. Then cut corners to buy more. Bonds put money to work fighting the war instead of letting it shove up prices. They mean safety for you tomorrow. And they'll help keep prices down today.

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